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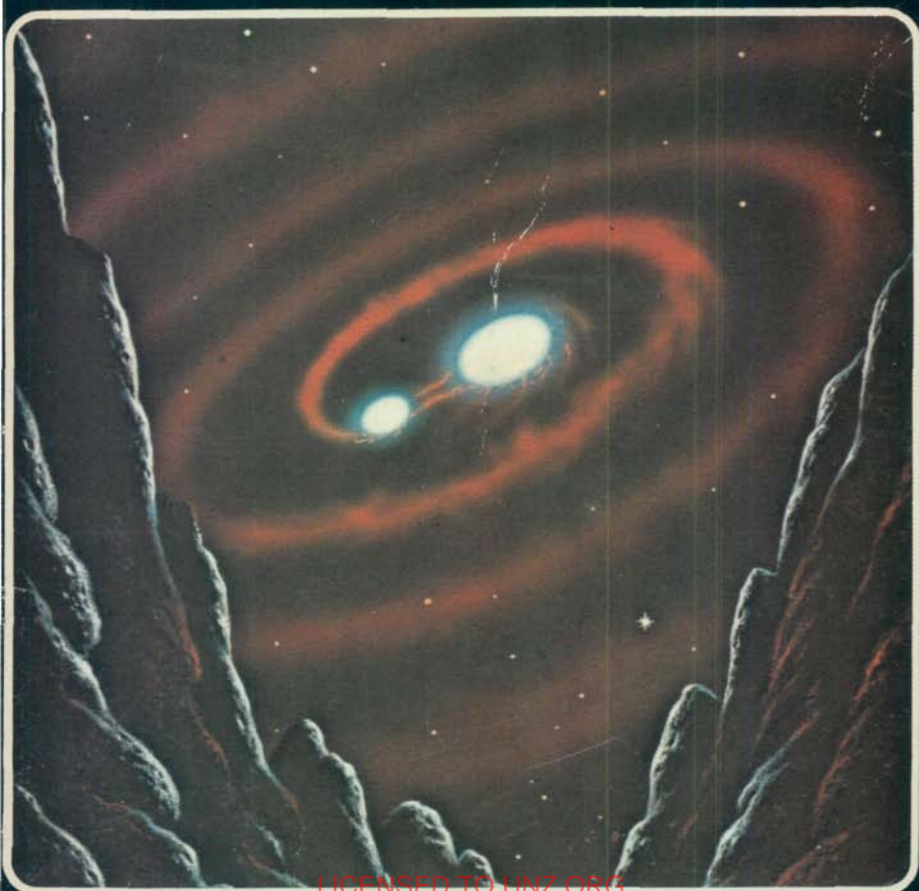
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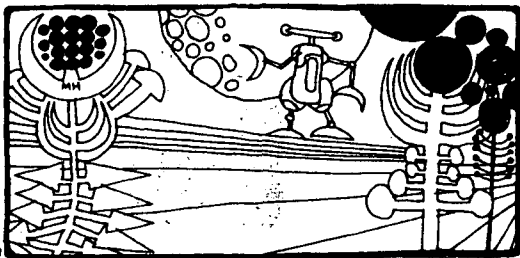
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**TED
WHITE**

EDITORIAL



SHORT SUBJECTS: 1. DR. WERTHAM ON FANZINES. In the July, 1970 issue of this magazine I remarked upon the news that Dr. Fredric Wertham, noted author of *Seduction of the Innocent* and comic-book-burner of the 1950's, had developed an interest in sf fandom and fanzines.

According to *Locus*, the sf newspaper, a report had appeared in *The Twentieth Century Fund Newsletter* that "Fanzines—amateur publications produced by adolescents that discuss comic strips, science fiction, sex, and the adult world—will be the subject for a Fund study under the direction of Fredric Wertham, a well-known psychiatrist. . ." I reviewed Wertham's previous history of involvement in the media—his book which launched the anti-comics witchhunts and mass bonfires of the 1950's, and his later, unsuccessful, attempt to arouse the same sort of public wrath against television—and I came to the following conclusion:

"I very much doubt that an outsider like Wertham, coming upon us as he has with any

number of fixed preconceptions about the Phenomenon he is investigating, will even be able to sort out the tangled antecedents of present-day fandom and fanzines. There are, you see, a proliferation of fandoms today, most of them bastard offsprings of sf fandom, and of varying degrees of consanguinity."

Recently I was given an advance copy of the result of Dr. Wertham's labors among the fanzine vinyards: *The World of Fanzines*, a 133-page volume (plus indices) subtitled *A Special Form of Communication*, and published (at \$10.00) by the Southern Illinois University Press.

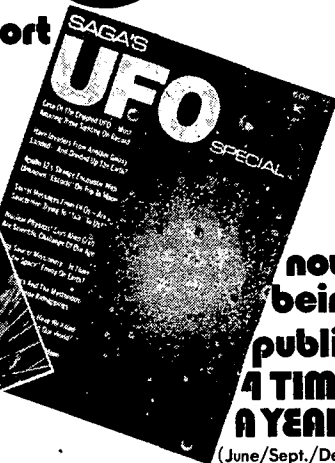
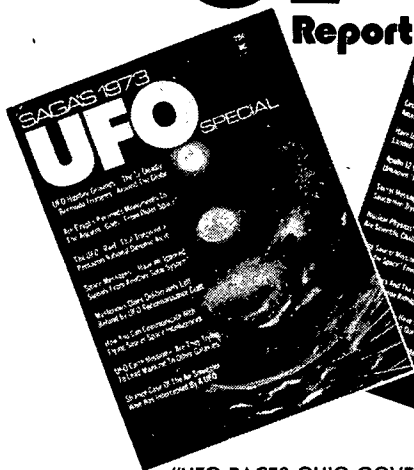
The copy I was given is additionally fascinating because it is a xerox copy of the galley proofs in pasteup form, with corrections penned in, plus a copy of the dustjacket with one line of the inside-jacket blurb x-ed out. (The deleted line? In the sentence, "Gradually Dr. Wertham became interested in fanzines as a phenomenon and began to collect them, a collection which now numbers in the thousands, and

(continued on page 127)

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In a world in which most of the population is sterile and children are both rare and valued, what can a virile man do when his wife suddenly disappears. . . ?

AS I LIB AND BREED

J.W. SCHUTZ

Illustrated by JOE STATON

JOHN ROBERT KNOX propped himself on one elbow and grinned down at Cynthia's face.

"Enjoy yourself, Sin Kitten?" He let himself fall backward, his arm still under her neck. The motion shook the bed.

Cynthia opened her eyes and gave her husband an impatient look.

"Enjoy! Is that all you can think about? That was for making John Bobbie, Jr., and not exclusively for your selfish pleasure."

"I take my pleasure where I find it, madam."

"You'd better not let me catch you at it," Cynthia told him, and closed her eyes carefully.

John Robert ignored this gambit.

"Besides, Angel Cat," he said, "don't pretend that John Bobbie's the only reason. You were meowing every time I said woof. It'll be great having a Junior in the house, using my razor and bor-

rowing the car on Saturdays, but I'd like to feel wanted for myself alone, and not merely for my vast wealth in sperm." He reached for the switch of the bedside lamp. "Anyway, the way we've been going, I don't know how long my fortune will last."

Cynthia's eyes snapped open. She looked at him anxiously, but without turning her head.

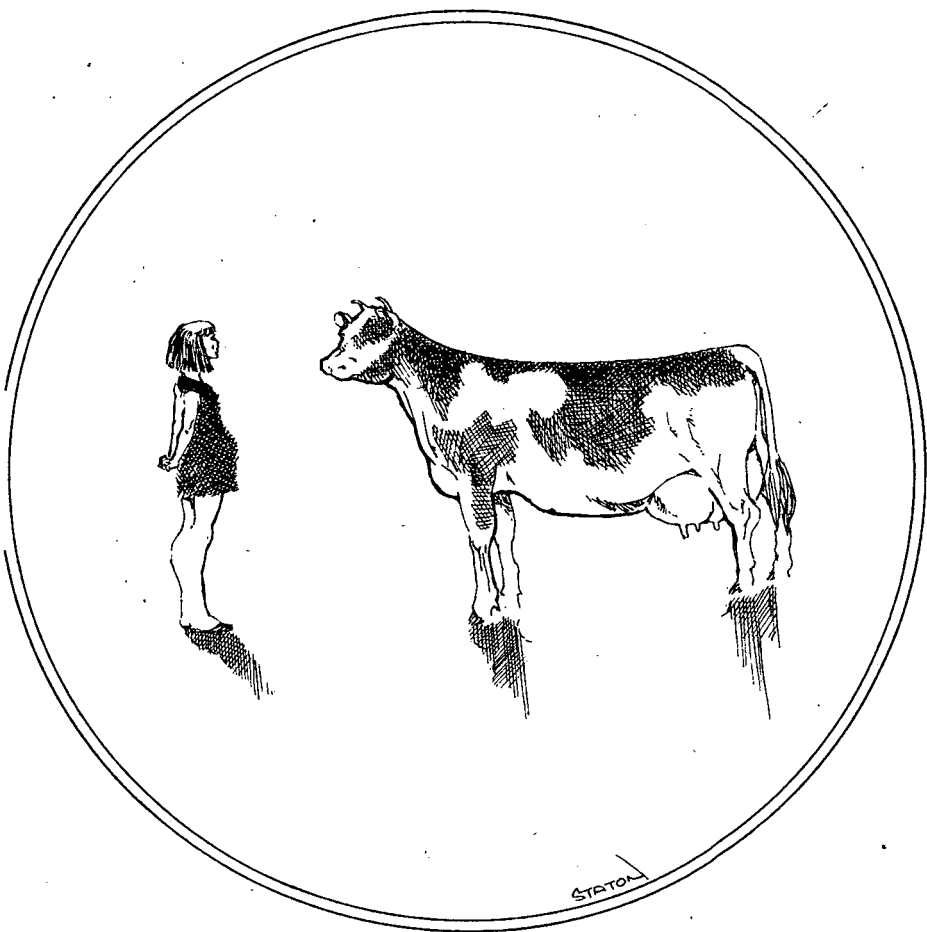
"Could that be the reason, do you think. . ."

"No, not yet, Rabbit Child. But if you aren't getting any fun out of our twice daily. . . ah . . . experiment, maybe I better take a couple of months off and build up my capital!"

"You wouldn't!"

"Oh yes I would." He snapped off the light and settled himself for sleep. In the darkness she moved closer to him and her lips nibbled at his ear.

"I do have fun," she whispered. "Of course I do. It's only. . ."



"I know, Cherub Cub. John Bobbie's important to me too." He gathered her against him and felt the warm current of her breath quicken as her knee slid across his thigh.

They slept heavily and awoke late.

In the morning Knox let his wife sleep and fixed his own breakfast. When he eased the car out of the carport and headed for the plant, most of 'Geritolia,' as Cynthia called the neighborhood, was already stirring.

In the post-pill age, John reflected, a man could all but take his pick of spacious suburban estates. The only trouble was that young couples like themselves were apt to find that most of their neighbors were in their nineties. Old Mrs. Frank, whose husband kept cows for a hobby, waved to him as he turned out of his driveway.

"Late this morning, aren't you, young man?" she called after him.

John smiled politely as he tapped the button that would put the vehicle on ground-effect jets. The hissing mercifully kept him from hearing Mrs. Frank's coy comment about sleeping late. The rest of the way to the plant he brooded a little.

In a world where a too-successful Pill had produced a second generation that was almost entirely sterile, Knox knew he owed his existence to the fact that his grandparents were among the few who had never used it. But

he had inherited a world in which senior citizens outnumbered those of productive age by five to one. Sometimes he felt the task of supporting even a much reduced population fell heavily on him. Worse, income in underpopulated America was related largely to the number of a man's children. And after five years of marriage he and Cynthia had no children at all.

It was tough on Cyn. The pressure on her by friends and neighbors was not only constant but often passed the bounds of good taste. Lately they had stopped going out because of it. The pressure, he knew, was what had sent them to Dr. Maxfeldt for fertility check-ups. He'd have to drop in on Maxfeldt on the way home to get the results. In the meantime he and Cynthia had been trying their 'experiment.'

Knox grinned. A couple more days would tell them how that had turned out. He parked his car and went into the plant still grinning. Whether it worked or not, it had resulted in a highly enjoyable second honeymoon.

At the end of his ten-hour day, Knox, physically and mentally exhausted, would have forgotten to see Maxfeldt if the man on the next bench hadn't insisted on showing the holograms of his eleventh baby. As it was he dozed off in Maxfeldt's waiting room. It was the doctor himself who awakened him.

"What news, doc?" John Robert

mumbled, rubbing his eyes and straightening his jacket.

"For you, good news," the doctor told him.

John became suddenly alert.

"What do you mean, for me? What about Cynthia?"

"For her, not so good. Come into my office."

When Maxfeldt finished his explanation he sat back and regarded John compassionately.

"I know it's hard to take, young man, but it's going to be a lot harder for Anita, you know."

"Cynthia," John corrected him dully. Admitted, the old boy was ancient enough to call him 'young man' twice over, but Knox wished, with some irritation, that the doctor would at least make the effort to remember Cynthia's name.

"Sorry. Cynthia. I wish," the physician said, "you'd let me be the one to break the news to her."

Knox brushed this aside.

"Is there any chance that it's just *one* of her ova, and not all of them? Maybe, with further tests. . ."

"We never test just one ovum, Mr. Knox," the doctor said a little stiffly. "I assure you the tests were quite complete. There's also the matter of the partially inverted womb—but that was corrected at the time I made the tests. No, I'm afraid her parents must have taken the Pill at one time. Her case is typical, and her ova are simply not viable."

If Maxfeldt was right, this was going to be damn difficult to tell Cyn.

"Isn't there something we can do, Doctor?" John implored.

"Not if Anita—I mean Cynthia—doesn't produce viable ova, son."

John hated to let it go at that, knowing how much Cynthia wanted a child. They had once talked of adopting a child, but even if, in this near-childless world, there had been babies available for adoption, it wouldn't have satisfied her deep longing.

"I don't suppose we could borrow an ovum?" John said hopelessly.

Dr. Maxfeldt looked at John intently, got up, opened the door of his office, and peered out into the empty reception room. Behind his desk again, his expression was furtive.

"As a matter of fact, Knox, a sort of borrowing is possible. A couple of researchers in England at the turn of the century managed to fertilize ova *in vitro* and subsequently implanted the developing embryos in the womb, bringing the infants to term."

John felt a thrill of hope. Any alternative would be better than telling Cynthia she couldn't have a child.

"Why couldn't we do that, then?" he demanded.

"There are two rather serious obstacles," Maxfeldt told him. "One is that you'd have quite a time persuading. . . ah. . . your

wife to bear what is really another woman's child."

"And the other?"

"That it's damn-all illegal. Since the Pill Disaster many kinds of research have been banned, and anything having to do with parturition most strongly of all."

John's hope sagged. The legal aspect didn't bother him much, but he couldn't quite see Cynthia consenting to carry another woman's embryo. If she had to find out her case was hopeless, he might broach the subject to her, of course.

"Would it be difficult to get hold of a viable ovum?" he said.

"No. That's no problem. Most women produce more than they can use. In fact I have one woman right now—nameless for obvious reasons—who produces perfect ova, but who, because of an excess of female hormones, miscarries every time."

John was sure that his elderly physician would be happy to defy the law if Cynthia would go along with this scheme. But that was the trouble. How to persuade Cyn, and without telling her she was sterile? He left the doctor's office feeling lower than he had in years, and when he got home Cynthia was in tears. Her period had come a day or so early. Their 'experiment' had failed.

"It's all your fault," Cynthia told him. "You and your pleasure! I bet you didn't even go to Dr. Maxfeldt to see how your tests came out."

"Yes, I did."

"Well?"

"He said I was all right." John didn't stress the personal pronoun.

"He would. You men all stick together. I don't believe he even did any tests. As for me, he was more interested in things that were none of his business. Just a D.O.M. if you ask me."

"Old Maxfeldt?"

"Yes, 'old Maxfeldt.' He fiddled around in there with his rubber glove until I thought I'd go out of my mind. He even put his glasses on to see better."

"The part he sees isn't one of your most esthetic features, Lamb's Wiglet. Give ol' Doc his due."

Cynthia giggled.

"Maybe you're right. Especially as that day I'd tried a little peroxide to see how I'd look as a blonde. It didn't work very well. Greenish, kind of." Suddenly her mood changed again and her eyes filled. "Anyway, it's all your fault and you've got to *do* something."

John moved to take her in his arms to comfort her but she ran hurriedly behind a chair.

"No sir! That's not what I meant by doing something. And certainly not now!"

This was not the day to give Cynthia the bad news, either.

The day when he *could* tell her somehow just didn't want to come around. When she was gay and full of little giggles he dreaded to see the change that would come

over her. When she was sad he couldn't bring himself to add to her woes. The longer he put it off the less he could bear the sight of Cyn's eyes. Besides, suppose there had been a mistake? They should have the tests done over. If the re-run was still negative, he'd let Doc tell her.

On this decision he went to Maxfeldt to make the necessary appointment. Mrs. Hale kept him waiting by himself in the reception room longer than was good for him. The idea of an illegal test tube baby had time to grow more and more appealing. He could bring Cynthia in for these 'repeat tests' and Doc could implant the partially developed embryo at that time. Why not? Cyn didn't need to know a thing about it.

When he was actually in the doctor's presence, part of his resolve failed him. He let the old man believe that they had both accepted producing a foetus *in vitro*. He was unprepared for the rapidity with which things moved after that.

Dr. Maxfeldt referred briefly to his records and whisked John into a small private disrobing room, handing him a sterile, wide-mouthed flask.

"Let's have a semen specimen in that, Knox."

Later, when the impassive Nurse Hale had taken charge of the specimen, John put a question that was worrying him.

"If this thing grows, Doc, how much of a job will it be to plant it

in Cynthia's body? Will she have to take a day off?"

"Probably more like two or three. It isn't much of an operation, but I'd prefer it to be done under anesthesia."

This was Trouble. Cynthia would have to be told the whole story. No chance of passing it off as part of a second examination, even if Doc consented to doing it that way. For that matter, John didn't know if Maxfeldt would agree, and he wasn't about to ask him now. He'd wait until he'd had another chance to talk to Cynthia. Maybe he could get her to go along. Cross this bridge when he came to it.

The trouble with this plan was that the hour of reckoning came almost at once. Maxfeldt called him only a few days later.

"That you, Knox?" the doctor's cheery voice enquired. "Can you have Anita at the clinic by nine o'clock Saturday morning?"

"Cynthia, Doctor. Did you say Saturday? This Saturday?"

"Yes. Of course this Saturday. The fifteenth. What's the problem? Mrs. Knox. . . ah . . . Cynthia's not ill, is she?"

"No, no. Nothing like that. Only. . ."

"All right, then. Have her here Saturday morning. We'll have to run a few tests, and then we can do the little job sometime Sunday."

"But isn't this kind of fast, Doc? I thought. . ."

Maxfeldt chuckled.

"Most laymen don't realize how fast a couple of cells can multiply. If you got the same action out of your stock portfolio you'd be rich in a month."

"But can't we put this off a couple days, Doc? Cyn's got a lot of things to do before. . ."

"'Fraid not, son. You'll have to have her here Saturday or it's going to be all off." The doctor's voice hardened slightly. "I'm taking a big risk as it is now, you know."

"Yeah. I know. Saturday morning, you say?"

"Saturday at nine. Without fail," Maxfeldt added sternly. "Don't forget, young man, that there's a human life at stake."

"All right. I'll have her there." As John hung up he added, "Somehow!" under his breath just as Cynthia came into the hall.

"Have who where?" Cynthia said, rumpling his hair. "I don't know if I like that sound of that. Are you planning to cheat on me?"

"As if I'd have the strength!" he told her, and waited for her grin.

But Cynthia wasn't grinning. There was a look of sadness in her eyes that contracted his heart. It contracted still more when he realized that she was waiting for a serious answer to her question. This would have to be it, then. He'd have to make a stab right now at getting her to the clinic on Saturday.

"Actually, Cyn, dearest, the call was about you. And the 'where' is

Dr. Maxfeldt's clinic."

"What for?" Cynthia was standing very still.

John hesitated. Perhaps the *whole* story wouldn't have to come out right away. He hated partial solutions—half truths—but taking the bull by the horns was only likely to result in his getting gored.

"Well . . . that is, Doc. . . thinks that you. . . I mean we can have a baby," he finished in a rush. "He's got a new technique, or something."

He stopped and waited for Cynthia's reaction. There wasn't any. She simply stood looking at him silently.

"You'll have to be there Saturday," he said. "At the clinic, I mean."

"Why Saturday? That's day after tomorrow."

"Well. . . it's important, he says. Dr. Maxfeldt, that is." John's voice came to an uncertain stop. "You don't seem very pleased, Cynthia."

"I'm not."

"Why? I thought you wanted to have a baby more than anything."

"I do. But I don't believe it, that's why. There's something you're not telling me. Besides, I've been to Dr. Maxfeldt's office just this afternoon. I saw Sue Hale. There's something wrong. She wouldn't say, but I just know it!"

Cynthia must have been suppressing for some time the torrent of tears that followed.

John let her sob them out on his shirt, feeling pretty miserable himself. Looking in her swimming eyes he found he could hold out no longer.

"Look, Blossom Bunny. . ." He told her the whole story. When he had finished, she pushed herself away from him and stood with her fists on her hips.

"John Robert Knox, do you mean to stand there and tell me that you have started—actually *started*—all this without telling me? You knew all the time that. . .that I c-couldn't. And now you want me to have some other woman's substitute baby! To have *her* morning sickness and everything! I wouldn't even see what I was getting, like I would if we adopted a baby. Well, *I won't*. I won't have anything to do with it."

"But Kitten, the baby's already started. I mean, Doc's got it in a test tube and its already growing up. Besides, it wouldn't be just anybody's baby. It's got my seed."

"Why bother with a test tube, then? Why didn't you just take the hussy—whoever she is—to bed with you? Or maybe you did?"

"That wouldn't work," John said, reasonably. "She has miscarriages all the time."

"Oh! So you have tried it. Who is she?"

"No, dammit, I haven't tried it! All I know is that she has too much female hormones and can't keep an embryo."

Cynthia was glaring at him with fierce intensity, but at these words the glare became a calculating expression. Suddenly she put her fingers over her mouth and gasped.

"Oh!"

"What's this 'Oh' business?"

"Don't you speak to me. I know who she is. I should have known it all along, the way she's been hanging on your neck everywhere we go. You've been sleeping with her, and now she wants me—me!—to carry her bastard. I suppose she plans to claim it back when it's weaned and potty-trained?"

"Now Cynthia, what the *hell* are you talking about? Who is this person?"

"Oh, you know her all right. It's Alice Beddoes, that's who. Don't try to pretend it isn't. She's the only one we know who's disgustingly oversexed, and I know she's had dozens of miscarriages. At least one since her divorce."

Alice Beddoes. Cynthia might be right at that. Doc wouldn't say who'd supplied the ovum, but it could easily have been Alice. Maxfeldt was her doctor, and there was no doubt that Alice had all the female hormones any one woman could use.

It took John a fraction too long to follow this chain of thought through. Cynthia snatched up an ash tray and shattered it against the wall over his head. While he was picking up the pieces and brushing some of them out of his

hair, he heard the front door slam. He made it to the driveway just in time to see Cynthia pulling away in a taxi. "I'm leaving, that's what I'm doing!" she shouted in reply to his question.

Saturday morning came and John had no word from Cynthia. He tried her mother's, of course, but drew a blank. He phoned all of her friends, but if they knew anything they weren't telling. He was still phoning at 9:30 when, between outgoing calls, the instrument rang. He flicked it on with trembling fingers, but recognized Dr. Maxfeldt's voice even before the screen lit up.

"What's the matter with you, Knox? Why aren't you here? Is Anita all right?"

"Cynthia, Doctor. Yes, she's all right. At least, I hope so."

"What do you mean, you hope so?"

"I mean I haven't seen her for two days, that's all."

Maxfeldt's eyebrows went up and his face came so near the video pickup that his features blurred on the screen.

"If she's missing, Knox, it's a disaster," Maxfeldt hissed. "You'd better come down here right away. We can't talk about this on the phone, but it's a matter of life and death, understand? Get down here, and don't waste any time about it!"

"What the hell, Doc. . ." John began, but Maxfeldt merely glared at him and silently shook his fist at the pickup. On John's

screen the fist looked like a blue-veined ham. When the contact was broken John sat in amazement for a moment before the apparatus.

"I wonder what's eating him?" he asked himself. Whatever it was it called for a visit to Doc's office, no doubt about that.

When he got there, Maxfeldt was quick to explain what was eating him.

"I don't have to tell you, you young chump, that there are far too few births in the world these days. And I told you before we started that this was illegal. The least you could have done was to tell me you hadn't got your wife's consent."

"So, all right," John snapped. "I'm sorry. But no one's accusing you, are they? Why not just forget it?"

"Forget it! Are you out of your mind? What am I going to do with *that*?" Maxfeldt jerked his thumb at the culture where the embryo lay amidst a tangle of wires and tubes. John peered at the tiny fleck of tissue.

"What do you usually do? Dump it down a sink somewhere."

"Dump it down. . ." Maxfeldt tore out hair he didn't have. "First I break one of the toughest laws on the books concerning medical practice. Now I'm supposed to add murder to my crimes!"

"Aw, come on, Doc. Murder! What murder?"

"You may have lost track of this," Maxfeldt shouted, "but that's a *human being* there. Your son, or daughter."

"Don't give me that," John protested. "The old abortion laws say it isn't a human being until the fourth month. Besides, no one knows anything about it."

"Damn the old abortion laws. Look where they got us. Almost depopulated the earth. Try an abortion in this century and see what happens to you. As for who knows; I know, you know, Mrs. Hale knows. Your wife knows, and she's probably telling her mother right this minute."

"Not her mother. I tried there. So what am I supposed to do? I can't carry the baby myself. Or can I?"

"No. Of course not. But you can find someone who will. And pretty damn quick, too. Tomorrow noon at the latest this embryo of mine has to be implanted."

"Now wait a second, Doc. You can't expect me to walk up to one of my friends and ask her if she'll bear my child. There's one or two, maybe, who might say okay, in a more conventional unconventional manner, if you know what I mean. This test tube bit's too much."

"That's your problem," Maxfeldt said, stubbornly. "All I care about is a womb for my embryo by noon tomorrow."

"And if you don't have one?"

"I'll have to go to the police with the whole story. Then

heaven help me—and you. It's your fault, anyway."

John's heart sank. Maxfeldt might very well do just that. The clue to his feelings was in the phrases 'this embryo of mine' and 'a womb for my embryo.' The old man was thinking of the embryo as his own.

By the same token, Doc might do almost anything to give the child a chance for life. If all he wanted was a womb. . . let's see. They had to use anti-rejection serum for something like this, didn't they? And where did the serum come from? Cows! Why couldn't a cow carry the baby? He wouldn't have to explain it to her, or risk blackmail afterward either. Old Ben Frank, at the place right next to his own, had more cows than he knew what to do with. He could buy one from Ben and keep it in the other half of the two-car garage. Old Ben would be delighted to have another neighbor take up suburban ranching.

This would not be the thing to tell Doc Maxfeldt, however. Not quite yet.

"All you want's a womb, right, Doc?"

Maxfeldt nodded grimly. "That's all I want. A complacent placenta."

"Oh, she'll be complacent, all right. Only, can you do the implant at my place? The female I have in mind isn't one I can bring to your office. There's limits."

The physician conceded that he could, if necessary, come to

the Knox house, and John left, pleading understandable haste, before Maxfeldt could ask too many questions.

Avoiding questions from Ben Frank was, however, a more difficult matter.

"What made you decide to take up animal husbandry?" Ben wanted to know.

"Husbandry?" John felt his neck getting red. "Husbandry. Oh! Well, ah you see, Cynthia and I got this idea that the milk you get at the supermarket maybe isn't too good for us. You know. . ."

"You're absolutely right, young fellow. They take all the life out of it in the stores. Over-pasteurize it, that's what I say. Wouldn't surprise me if they added chemicals too. But we could give you all the milk you want! No need to raise your own cows."

"Yeah. Thanks. I know. But I thought it would be a sort of a good hobby for me. A man needs something to do in his spare time."

This was the right note. Mr. Frank responded to it as John had hoped.

"Yep. You're right, Knox. Nothing more satisfying than to see your own living things thriving. Some go in for gardening, but I have always said that stock was more interesting. A cow's first calf is almost your own, in a way. Cows are a lot of work, though, and you can't let them down. Got to be fed and milked every day.

And kept clean. 'Taint easy."

John admitted this and tried to bring the talk around to buying one of Frank's cows.

"But where would you keep her, Knox? Seems like you'll have to build a stable first."

John explained that the other half of his two-car garage would be more than adequate, that it had running water, a rough cement floor that could be easily cleaned, and so on. It would have been easier and quicker, he thought, to have bought his cow from a stranger. Ben Frank clearly loved all his beasts and had a few words of praise for each. When John at last settled, against Ben's arguments and advice, on a young heifer, "Still dry but ready to be bred," he felt that he had spent most of his life in his neighbor's stables.

The cow, once installed in his garage, demanded more attention that afternoon than John had bargained for, especially as he kept rushing into the house from time to time to be near the phone. If Cynthia should come back before Sunday morning, things might be considerably simplified. Or they might not.

By the time hay was brought in, straw put down, the heifer watered, fed, and her stall cleaned twice (the place would certainly not appeal to Doc as an operating theater), the last trace of daylight was gone and Knox could not decide if he was more hungry or more tired.

After a shower, a change of clothes, and three Bourbons on the rocks, he felt better, but still hungry. He gave a final sour look at the phone, looked in on Alice (that was the cow's name), and headed for the Chinese restaurant.

The Pearl Moon Palace not only served good Chinese food, and cocktails, but had the further advantage that Cynthia might show up there if she was holed up somewhere near.

It wasn't Cynthia, however, whom he found in the Pearl Moon, but Alice Beddoes. She was sitting alone in a booth, and when she saw him beckoned him over.

"Well, John! I don't often see you around. Sit down and have a drink. Is Cynthia joining you?" Her smile showed startlingly white and regular teeth. She was proud of her teeth.

"No, I don't think so," John said vaguely. "How about you? Expecting anyone?"

She was not expecting anyone. When the waiter came John ordered a Bourbon and looked at Alice Beddoes through a blur of fatigue and three previous drinks.

Nice girl, Alice.

What happened to the rest of the evening, John was never quite sure. He remembered showing Alice the cow. And Alice's driving off annoyed about something while he cleaned the makeshift stable one more time before turning in.

In the morning he would have liked to stay in bed, but the lowing of his new acquisition reminded him of his duties, even on Sunday. Sunday! With a groan he got into a pair of blue jeans and went out to the garage to see to. . . My God! . . . Alice, the cow. Maybe that was what had offended Alice Beddoes.

Alice (the cow) had not been a tidy sleeper. John sloshed a pail of water over her hindquarters and, to the cow's astonishment, scrubbed her with a long-handled brush. Then he swept out the stall, scrubbed its floor, and put down fresh straw. Next he fed the animal. Alice repaid this kindness by making it necessary to rescrub the floor and put down more straw. When at last an angry John Knox and a somewhat nervous Alice Cow regarded each other in a not-quite-surgically-clean stable, it was time for Dr. Maxfeldt to put in his appearance. Cynthia had still not put in hers.

"I wish there was some way to put a diaper on you," John said to Alice. "Try to contain yourself until Doc comes, will you?"

Alice made no promises.

John went to the house to change and meet Maxfeldt.

Dr. Maxfeldt arrived with a carful of paraphernalia, without his nurse, and with a chip on his shoulder. He stamped into the Knox living room.

"All right. Where's the patient? Let's get on with it."

"The patient's in the garage,"

John told him.

"In the garage? What the hell! Bring her in one of the bedrooms, then."

"I don't think I can do that."

"Why not?"

"Doc, you aren't going to like this, but you did say all you needed was a womb."

"Of course I did, you young ass. You didn't expect I'd plant the baby in a cabbage patch, did you? What won't I like?"

"Come and see," John said miserably, and led him out to the stable, both men with armsful of apparatus.

When Alice and Dr. Maxfeldt caught sight of each other for the first time, the future history of John Robert Knox, Junior, almost ended then and there. But Doc's training came to his rescue. The small flask containing the genetic experiment was juggled just in time to John's sheet-covered work bench. Then Maxfeldt placed his hands on his hips and produced a verbal explosion that had even the placid Alice looking at him in bovine dismay.

John bowed his head and weathered the storm. When most of it had blown over he sighed.

"If I consider Alice a fit mother for my child, why shouldn't you?" he said.

This set Doc off again. When he came to a full stop his hands were trembling and he was looking for a place to sit down. John gave him a folding chair and pulled a bottle of Old Granddad from

under the work bench.

"Look, Doc," he said, reasonably, "This'll work, won't it? With anti-rejection serum and all?"

Maxfeldt reached for the bottle.

"How the hell should I know? It could. It might. But. . ."

"But nothing, Doc. Cynthia's gone. You said yourself that there's a life at stake. I'm gambling that Cynthia'll come back for a baby. That's all she needed to be happy. And all you needed was a womb."

"A womb! Yes. But you knew damn well what I meant—a woman's womb, not a cow's. Dammit, I won't do it!"

"I was afraid you'd say that. So what's left? Flush it down the drain, I guess, like I said in the first place." John turned the tap in the sink and the cow turned her head enquiringly. "I'm sorry," John said, "I didn't give you any water, did I?"

The doctor feebly waved the hand that held the drink.

"No thanks. Not for me. I need this one straight."

"I wasn't talking to you. I was talking to Alice."

"Alice?" Maxfeldt glared around wildly. "Who's Alice?"

"The womb here. Here you are, Alice." John offered a bucket half full of water with a generous jigger of whiskey in it to the cow.

The cow sipped and rolled a suspicious eye at John, then let her thirst overcome her scruples and broke a life-long abstention. Maxfeldt watched her drink, then

followed her example. He circumnavigated the cow and looked at her distastefully from all angles. Alice returned the compliment, looking coyly over her shoulder at him when he came to a stop before the future scene of operations. Maxfeldt shuddered and gulped down the rest of his drink.

"I know it isn't the view you're used to, Doc," John told him, "But she's as clean as most of your patients. I washed her myself and. . ."

"Shut up. How much does she weigh?"

"Who?"

"Cynthia. No, dammit, *not* Cynthia! Alice. The cow."

John had this information, and gave it. Maxfeldt groaned and prepared the largest hypo in his bag and loaded it with the entire contents of a small bottle.

"What's that for?" John asked anxiously.

"Anesthetic," Maxfeldt told him. "Not to save the mother of your child pain. Just to keep me from getting my head kicked off. I hope it's enough."

It was enough. Alice took the hypo without wincing and, after an interminable wait, folded gently into a boneless heap on her pile of fresh straw. Maxfeldt waited a decent interval, lifted one of the animal's heavy eyelids, then got to work, muttering dangerously from time to time.

When the doctor finished the two men drank the last of the bottle, which did a little (but not

enough) to put the dishevelled physician in a more reasonable frame of mind. Maxfeldt left the stable-garage threatening dire consequences if the implant didn't work, and privately imagining even more horrific ones if it did. John was alone with the still unconscious cow when the door slammed and a gruff voice spoke behind him.

"My God! What's happened to Alice?"

It was Ben Frank. John regarded him without favor as the farmer knelt beside the limp body.

"Alice has fainted," John said, sourly.

Frank sniffed the slightly antiseptic odor of the garage, and put his face near the cow's.

"She smells of whiskey!"

"That's right," John replied. "She's drunk. Passed out. I just had the doctor here to see to her. He says it's all right, and we're to let her sleep it off." He tried to move Frank toward the door but the farmer was reluctant to leave the now loudly snoring Alice.

"I didn't know Maxfeldt was a vet," Frank said. "Maybe we should get someone else to look at her."

"He isn't," John admitted, "But he came as a very special favor to me."

"I see. But how did she get drunk in the first place?"

"Well, it was like this," John said, "I had this bottle in here. . ." He gestured at the bot-

tle, now on its side under the work bench.

"And she probably tipped it over," Frank finished the sentence, "and lapped up the liquor."

"She lapped it up, all right. And that's what I'm going to do myself. Join me?"

"No," said Frank, curtly. "You sure there isn't anything else we can do for this cow?"

"We might give her some strong coffee when she comes around." John was a bit tired of Frank and the idea of another drink seemed better the more he thought of it.

"Don't know if I like your attitude, young man," Frank snapped. "I'm sorry I sold Alice to you now. If anything happens to her the SPCA will hear about it, believe me!"

THE NEXT FEW WEEKS became months all too rapidly, even without the comfort of Cynthia's presence. In fact they flew by with very little peace in them. Cynthia's mother finally admitted that she knew where Cynthia was, but refused to tell him more than that. His wife and her mother were apparently the only people in the world who left him alone. Until it was obvious that Alice the Cow was definitely about to become Alice the Mother, John received almost daily visits from Dr. Maxfeldt. Thereafter he began to receive less frequent visits from the medical man but more fre-

quent ones from the amateur farmer, Mr. Frank. Frank examined Alice with proprietary interest and with a puzzling sort of amusement. One day he demanded to know when and where John had had her bred.

"I don't recall seeing you take Alice away from here and there's certainly been no stud around, but it's pretty plain that cow's pregnant, Knox," he observed. "Artificial insemination?"

John snatched at this straw.

"Yes," he said, positively.

The reply seemed to cause Frank concern. "State Agricultural Department?" he demanded.

"Well, no. Not exactly." John was less positive.

Frank waited for a further explanation but John didn't offer one. The farmer left with a thoughtful expression on his face.

An even more disturbing visit was the one John had from Alice Beddoes a couple of weeks later. She appeared in the evening and went directly to the garage-cum-cowshed. John saw her arrive and went out to the shed to find her standing there in a severe business suit, examining Alice the cow with an even more severe air of disapproval. She did not return his greeting and left a few minutes later without having uttered a word. That night John's efforts to remember what he had said to Alice Beddoes months ago at the Pearl Moon Palace kept him awake for some time.

Dr. Maxfeldt had also lost a

night's sleep following an equally silent encounter with Mrs. Beddoes on the street on the day she had taken Sue Hale, his receptionist, to lunch.

The real trouble began thirty-nine weeks from the day Dr. Maxfeldt implanted the embryo in the womb of Alice the cow.

Alice herself opened the day's stirring events at five o'clock on a Sunday morning with a bellow of anguish which brought John Knox out of bed like a pitcher of cold water. One look at the animal's heaving flanks was enough to send John racing for the phone. The number he dialed was one he'd called a thousand times in the last few weeks. A woman's voice answered.

"Who is it?"

"It's me, Mother Cassidy," John panted. "Is Cynthia there?"

"You called me at five o'clock on a Sunday to ask that?" Cynthia's mother snarled. "You know I wouldn't tell you if she was."

"But do you know where she is?"

"What if I do?"

"Well tell her I'm in trouble. Tell her for God's sake to come home. Tell her I'll do anything she wants. I'll buy her an orphanage. Tell her I *need* her!"

"You need her, do you? That's all I've been waiting to hear. I'll tell her. I don't know what she'll do, but I'll tell her."

Mrs. Cassidy's image faded.

John hung up and immediately punched Dr. Maxfeldt's number. When the screen cleared the doctor's hair was hanging in his eyes and a white stubble covered his chin.

"What the hell, Knox. . ."

"Hell is right. Alice is starting to have her. . . I mean my. . . your. . . oh damn!. . . the b-calf!"

Maxfeldt's eyes cleared at once. "Son, you're in trouble."

"I'm in trouble? Cynthia's in hiding somewhere; I damn well can't take maternity leave from my job; there'll be an hours-old baby in the house and no mother in sight; and a heifer that's come in fresh but no calf. I can't just leave the baby in the stable. He couldn't even nurse unless Alice would sit down—and I don't think she's equipped for that. Doc, believe me, we're *both* in trouble."

"I know," Maxfeldt replied, "but I've made up *my* mind long ago to tell the authorities everything if a live ch. . . calf, I mean. . . is born. Can't get out of it anyway. That Beddoes woman is threatening to sue me."

"So it *was* her?"

"Yes. Never mind that. How is the patient. . . the cow, I mean? No, never mind that either. I'll be right over." The screen went blank.

John hauled a pair of jeans over his pajamas as another bellow came from the 'garage-cowshed'. He made three trips to Alice's bed of pain, getting supplies of

hot water and bringing out a secretly-purchased pink and blue layette, before Doc arrived, also dressed hastily over his pajamas. Alice, meanwhile, was getting down to business. Maxfeldt thrust a shovel in John's hands.

"Here, dammit. Make yourself useful. Clean this place up. God, what an operating theater!"

Alice's offspring was born at 6:00 a.m. Without explanation or apology she delivered into Doc's waiting arms a perfectly formed, lustily kicking, female calf. At 6:01 both men and Alice the cow became aware of Cynthia Knox standing in a voluminous cape at the side door of the garage with an indulgent smile on her face. Maxfeldt was the first to speak.

"Who the hell are you?"

John scowled at him. "That's Cynthia, Doc. My wife."

Dr. Maxfeldt grabbed the edge of the workbench with both hands. "But...but you're not Anita. . .I mean. . ."

"Anita Cox?" Cynthia raised a supercilious eyebrow. "I certainly am not."

At 6:01½ Dr. Maxfeldt quietly fainted with his head on a pile of far-from-antiseptic straw.

At 6:02 Ben Frank appeared, fully dressed and carrying a steaming pot of coffee.

"Well, well, folks," he boomed, then stopped to look at Maxfeldt, and at the calf. "Old Doc did a pretty good job, but if he's going to faint like that, he should have left cows to the regular vets."

This said, Frank expertly put the calf next to its mother's teats, helped Doc to his trembling legs, and passed out plastic cups of hot coffee.

"I've got a confession to make, though," he added when all four were sipping the scalding liquid. "You know, I had Alice here inseminated just before I brought her over, Knox. With some stock I had in the deep-freeze."

"B. .but. . ." John gasped.

"I know. I asked you some silly questions. I was trying to find out if you'd had her bred on your own, since you didn't seem surprised she was pregnant. If you'd paid a high stud fee I was going to reimburse you. But you didn't pay much, did you?"

"No. Nothing at all, in fact."

"Not thoroughbred stock, eh?"

"I guess you could say that," John admitted with a warning look at both Maxfeldt and Cynthia.

"That's all right, then." With a last approving glance at the calf, Ben Frank left.

John and Cynthia, tentatively holding hands, hardly noticed his departure. Doc was staring in shock at the calf. When he finally pulled himself together and cleared his throat for attention, it was Cynthia who immediately pounced.

"And now, John Robert, what's all this about an emergency?"

"Why. . ." John waved his hand vaguely at the calf.

"What's wrong with a cow's

having a calf?" Cynthia insisted.

Doc started to explain, but John waved him to silence.

"She knows, Doc. At least, most of it."

"And I think I can guess the rest," Cynthia said, rapidly taking in the doctor, the calf, and the layette exposed on John's work bench.

Maxfeldt groaned.

"That doesn't solve any problems, Knox," he said. "In fact, it's worse."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that's another person who knows. Mrs. Beddoes wormed the story out of Sue Hale and now she's threatening to sue."

"So sue? Who? Sue?"

"No. Alice."

Hearing her name preceeded by soo-ing sounds, Alice turned her huge brown eyes enquiringly toward Doc.

"No, not you!" the doctor shouted at the unoffending cow. "Alice Beddoes, that's who."

It was John's turn to groan. "Then we'll all go to jail."

"No we won't," Cynthia said firmly. "I can take care of Alice. Beddoes, that is."

"How?"

"When I got over my morning sickness I took the trouble to find out a few things about Alice. She won't dare say a thing. Besides, I can threaten to tell people she has false teeth."

"I always thought she had beautiful teeth," John said. "I

didn't know they were false."

"They aren't. And they are beautiful. That's the whole point. She'd spend the rest of her life denying it."

"And that'll keep her quiet?" John asked, doubtfully.

"Yes. It would," Maxfeldt said with a wan smile. "Your wife knows her psychology. At least where Mrs. Beddoes is concerned."

But John was suddenly not interested in Cynthia's skill in psychology. His eyes were riveted on Cynthia's waistline.

"Morning sickness you said? Hey! You're pregnant! How come? I thought you said. . ."

"That my period had come? It was a false alarm. Our John Bobbie Junior was well on the way when I left. I guess that's what made me so crazy. Now all we have to do is take care of Alice Beddoes and all's well."

"Not quite." Doc's face was lugubrious.

"What do you mean, not quite?" both Knoxes wanted to know at once.

"Sue Hale knows about the embryo *in vitro*. And there's my own conscience."

"Damn your conscience!" John stormed. "Did you, or did you not mix up Cynthia's tests with Anita Cox's?"

"That was Sue's fault. I'm going to fire her the minute I get back to the office."

"I wouldn't if I were you," John said menacingly.

(continued on page 42)

After doing a broadcast on science fiction with Roger Zelazny and Associate Editor Grant Carrington at American University's WAMU. I was handed a manuscript by an attractive young woman who wondered, hesitantly, if I could take a look at it and tell her if it was any good. Here it is. . .

PIPER, WHAT SONG?

DRUSILLA NEWLON CAMPBELL

Illustrated by RICHARD OLSEN

WE CAME for the children and found a ghost town on the fringes of the galaxy. Only at night, when the wind sings from the Northern Mountains, do I imagine I hear them calling us.

I

WE CALL THIS PLACE LaTierra. We call it by that name because of the nostalgia we feel for the planet from which we came. Not one adult in our village sleeps easily in this new place; but, already, the little ones have stopped thinking of Earth as their home and are perfectly happy here. Each morning they walk three miles to the village where there is a school. Always, with truly dog-like fidelity, they are accompanied by their mascot, a local creature shaped much like a boar but having long glossy auburn hair. This animal, whom my eldest has christened Pepe, attached himself

to the children quite naturally and although I was apprehensive at first, I soon developed some fondness for him. He and perhaps a dozen others of his kind appeared one afternoon shortly after our arrival. Until we saw them, we believed ourselves to be the only animal life on LaTierra. These are winning creatures; and, in spite of myself, I was taken by their gentle intelligence. Now I wonder how we thought to live without their company. Each time I look for my children, there is Pepe, running or walking beside them—as much a part of their life as an Earthling dog. I must admit that my mind rests easier knowing that Pepe accompanies my little ones on their explorations of this new world.

The day here is short, and the children spend barely three hours in their school. I do not wish them to be out past dark on this moonless world. It is strange and

beyond logic what causes the *mal de patria*. With each person it is different. For me it is not the fermented smell our houses have or the maroon of the grass; I miss the Earth most when I look at the dark sky and see no friendly lunar face. When we first arrived, I wept for the lack of it; by now I have more control of my outward feelings. The children are adjusting well, and I do not wish to burden them unnecessarily.

Already they bear a burden not shared by the other children in our small colony, for they are fatherless. My husband, Armando, could not bear the heart-strain of the Warp. His heart failed him, and he was the first of our party to be buried on LaTierra. Each day I visit his grave above the river which flows a quarter of a mile from our hacienda. I pray for his soul. I am a modern woman and well educated, but the superstitions of my ancestors still run within me; I worry sometimes if his soul has found its way from this new world to the old Heaven.

And so I am a widow without hope of another man, for each of the families in our party is just that—a family with both mother and father, husband and wife. The priest in our colony urges me to devote myself to the work of being at once mother and father to the little ones, and although this task takes much of my time, I am often lonely.

Nevertheless, it is a good life,



and were it not for Armando's not being with me, I would have no reservations about coming to LaTierra. At least here we are free. My children have forgotten what it was to be looked at with prejudice by those more fortunate folk with pale skins. They need never know that there are people who regard our tawny complexions and black hair as certain signs of stupidity and unreliability. I remember being ashamed that I could speak Spanish better than English when I entered school; I still recall that well-meaning teacher who tried to wipe out all racial memory in me. Here in this new world, our children are free to use the beautiful language that is theirs as birth-right.

But, still, we might have remained on Earth for all its hatreds and inequality had it been the good Earth it was meant to be. But the industrial nations had raped it and destroyed its beauty with factories that belched poisons into the once-blue skies and fouled the lakes and rivers and, eventually, even the sea. For the wealthy and pristine Whites, there were still a few places to escape all of this—but they were far beyond the financial capabilities of the poor and middle classes. Our salaries were high but most of them went for taxes, and the promised reforms never came.

Perhaps even this we could have borne for we were of the earth and, in spite of our history,

optimistic. But the Childbirth Decree and the closing of the churches, the assassination of the last Pope, and the imprisonment of many of our priests and high church officials was not to be borne. There were many of us who could not and would not give up the faith that had united and sustained our peoples for centuries. We would have children, for that was God's will; and the state had no dominion over that aspect of our lives. There had been talk in the White papers of enforced sterilization of all people of our faith, and we were forbidden to attend Mass. Armando and I were willing to go to prison rather than submit to the tyranny; but we were among the few—chosen at random—for whom this was not necessary.

II

MY NAME is Juanito; I am named for my uncle who is the jefe of our village. I am twelve and big enough to be a helper to my mother who is a widow and must tend our hacienda alone. I go to school six days a week during the growing season. The season is long for there is no real winter here. Our new home is not tilted on its axis, and we live near the equator as many of my ancestors did on the old world; far to the north there must be winter, but not where we live.

My mother believes that I, like my sisters and brothers, have for-

gotten the Earth from which we came, but she is wrong. I remember it well and think of it often when I am alone. Even when I am old, I will still think of myself as an Earthling. Do not misunderstand. I am very happy here. Except for one thing, I like LaTierra as much and more than the Earth. The one thing that is missing for me is sound. Where we lived on Earth was near a large city and from waking to sleeping life was full of sounds. Not all of them were nice, but some of them were exciting: like the wail of the rapa-tran and the sirens which might mean fire or illness or a defense check or burglary. These sounds made life interesting to me; and without them the days pass with a stillness that is unnatural. I think that there is something strange about LaTierra that only I, who love noise, have noticed. The air here seems to catch and hold what few sounds we make so that when Mamacita calls me from just across the grass her voice is muffled and hollow sounding. When my friends and I play we do not make the noise we did on Earth. In those days, Mama would come to the back door and cry out for us to, "Be quiet, for goodness sake." In the classroom, the teacher was always telling us to "Be quiet so we can think." Here, I have tried an experiment. I have yelled and talked and laughed and even cried loudly—more than was natural—but no one has complained. I

have not spoken of this to the other children. They are young and cannot remember any other way. Perhaps even if we one day build factories and rapa-trans and have LaTierran vehicles with sirens, they will not sound the same as those on Earth.

On Earth I saw birds only in the zoo; I never saw one flying wild. This makes me sad; and I have been looking, secretly, for birds in the forest near our home. I think what a delight it would be to capture one and bring it to my mother for a singing companion. But I have not seen any. Perhaps there are no birds on LaTierra.

As I have said, we live near the equator so that we may enjoy the warmth of the sun and the long growing season. To the north there are high mountains. No one has traveled over the mountains for there is much work to be done here, and Father Molina says that we must not explore. We must be thankful for all that we have. I respect the priest, but it is a secret wish of mine that one day I will go beyond the mountains and explore as my ancestors did hundreds of years ago. Those men were looking for gold and jewels, but I will be searching for sounds. Especially bird sounds.

III

BCAUSE HE WAS READY, Juanito was the first to hear the sound. Like the shattering of a thousand crystal goblets, it broke in upon

his sleep one night in the third year of the colony. At first he took it for a fragment of an Earth-dream, but when his eyes were open and the sound remained, he knew that it was real. The sounds, thousands upon thousands of them, all different and yet all subtly the same, seemed to surround him like some auditory rain shower. Stunned and delighted, he lay very still experiencing the sound totally. It lasted only a fraction of a moment. Suddenly it was dawn, and the sound had fled leaving Juanito unsure of having heard anything at all.

At breakfast: "Mama, did you hear anything funny in the night?"

"Hear? Juanito, was Pepe in the house?"

"No, Mama, not an animal sound exactly; just a sound sound."

She eyed her eldest strangely; perhaps children were not immune to the Earthlonging as she had thought. "You were dreaming of long ago. There are no sounds here. You know that."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I guess not, but it seemed real."

"I know; I have those dreams too. But they will pass. We will all forget in time. God will take care of that."

Juanito was not prepared to disagree. There had never before been sounds on LaTierra so why should they begin now and only for him? By the time he had finished his breakfast, and started

toward school- followed by the younger children and Pepe, he was almost convinced that it had been a dream.

The next night the dream that wasn't a dream came again. This time it stayed longer. Juanito delighted in it and was unhappy when it left. The following morning, he asked his mother if she had heard anything and once again she told him that he had been dreaming. But this morning, at the mention of sound, he noticed that Isabella, his ten year old sister, had been almost ready to add a comment but had thought better of it. As they walked toward the school, she pulled him aside and whispered confidentially, "The sound you said you heard? Well, it wasn't a dream Juanito; I heard it too. It was like musical icicles. You know, like on Earth."

By the end of the month they had all heard it. Eight year old Mina (who wanted to be a nun) thought it was like the bells of a hundred church steeples. Rudolpho said the sound was like a crowd of tiny people laughing. To each child the sound was different and uniquely his own. Deep within him, buried amidst his fondest dreams and hopes, Juanito knew that the sound came from birds; strange and beautiful silver-winged, golden-eyed nocturnal creatures that flew over the colony at night and then home to the other side of the mountains.

THE SOUND has been coming to me at night for longer and longer periods of time. If I am able, I go to bed early and try to sleep a little before it comes. Even so, I am always tired at school; I know that I am not doing well. In fact, it seems that we are all hearing the sound for there is not one school child who does not yawn and doze during his lessons. I believe that I speak for the others when I say that although we are glad for the sound—it is the most beautiful thing about this world of ours—we wish that sometimes it would not come. Only so that we could sleep a little more. The adults do not hear it, and so they sleep well. They wonder why we are so exhausted. I would tell Mama, but I know that she would say it is some sort of dream: a memory of Earth that the heart cannot forget. I am wondering why it is that the grownups in our colony cannot hear the sound when it comes in the night. In the beginning, I believed that it was indeed some sort of wonderful dream and that it would go away, perhaps when we were older. Now, however, I have changed my feeling and I think that it is some secret weakness that keeps them from hearing this music from the soul of LaTierra. I believe that the sound is all around us at night and that we need only to open our ears. Perhaps the older ones cannot

hear because they are still listening for Earth-sounds. Once I did this too, but the night sounds of LaTierra caught me unawares. Now I live for them.

Last night, I did a strange thing. As always, the sound came to my ears as soon as the house was quiet. At the start it was the same as always, but then it began to change in some small way which I cannot explain. The difference seemed to speak to me; not with words but with feelings and thoughts. It wanted me to go outside. I was so excited that I did not put on my slippers and robe. I believed that when I got outside I would only have to look up, and then I would see the wonderful silver birds. The grass was soft and damp between my toes; even here, at the equator, the air had grown almost cold. A strange cold it was, for the actual temperature was not very low; it seemed as if, lurking beneath the chill, there was some more intense cold. I stood on the grass, holding my arms around myself to keep from shivering and, of course, looking up, searching the sky for the birds. Even without the light of a moon, the sky glowed with the light of millions of stars; but still I could not see the birds. I knew that they were there, for I could hear them very clearly; but I was unable to see them. I could only decide that, just as my mother's ears were deaf to the sound of the birds, so

were my eyes blind to the sight of them.

v

IN MY HEART, I am concerned. These days I mourn Armando more than ever; I have such great need of him. He was not a great man, certainly; and he had won no great scholastic honours. Still, there was a wisdom within him that led many people, even those who were older and should have been wise in their own rights, to consult him and ask his advice. For example, when the possibility of forming the colony here on LaTierra was first put before us, it was not unusual for our house to be filled with men and women who had come to discuss the idea with Armando. It was his manner not to give long answers to peoples' questions; instead, he let them talk and talk until it seemed they found the answers within themselves. I have looked to find the answer to this new trouble, but there is no answer within me. I have considered going to Father Molina or to my friends, but I am afraid of appearing foolish. What would I say: "There is something wrong with our children"? They would laugh at me and say that there is never anything wrong with children; all that children do is accepted and loved, for are they not our children? Is this not the one time in life when they are free to be and do as they wish? To be a little crazy? Full of im-

aginings and fantasies?

"But," I would say, "they are always so tired and they are so silent. They seem to be distracted by something and do not need to speak to one another or even to me."

I know what they would think if I said that. "Poor Maria, she is becoming so strange; that is what happens to a woman who is without a man."

And so I am silent although I am ashamed of my cowardice; I should speak for I know that I am right. The children are changing. They do not laugh and talk among themselves as they once did. They are together constantly in groups of two or three or more; but such quiet, so unnatural for children.

Last night something awakened me. It may have been that my Guardian Angel tapped me and told me to arise and go to the window. That I did and I saw them—the children, all of them, and Pepe, their pet—standing apart from one another in the garden, staring upwards. They were shivering although the night was muggy with heat. It may be that I should have gone to them one by one and urged them into the house, but something kept me from it, and I simply stood and watched as if a guard of some sort. No, I am not a guard; I was too fearful for that. I am ashamed of my fear for there was nothing frightening to hear or see. It could have been that they were

innocent sleepwalkers. There was nothing for me to fear, but I was terrified.

VI

THERE IS SOMETHING STRANGE about all of us now; the grownups are beginning to sense it, particularly Mamacita. She watches me always. We children try to act as she expects us to, as all the adults expect us to behave, but it is exhausting. Father Molina, who teaches us, is furious because all his good little scholars have become lazy and sleepy. It takes too much of our precious energy to talk and play and laugh and learn during the day; we must conserve our energy for the night-time when we stand in the yard—in all the yards of our village—and listen. I have discovered that each of us hears something different. For me, it is the birds, but for Isabella it is snow sounds: soft flakes, brittle icicles. For our little nun it is church bells. For others, the sounds of waterfalls, laughter, all sort of things. My friend Pedro says that he hears the sound of crowds cheering. I do not ask how what sounds like birds to me can sound like crowds to Pedro. There is no need to ask for the important fact is that we know the sound is real, whatever it truly is. It is now many nights since we first went into the garden to listen, and it is no longer possible to stay in our beds when the sound comes. We are careful not to

wake Mamacita, but even this caution has become unimportant. More and more, the sounds are filling up our lives and leaving no room for small concerns.

VII

ONE NIGHT Maria, who had by now made it her habit to sleep lightly, listening for her children as they arose from their beds, stepped softly out of her bedroom and into the long hall. Just at this time, Rudolpho was also stepping into the hall. Maria stretched out her hand to him, a pleading gesture as if she knew that a demand would be useless. Her son gazed for a fraction of a moment into her eyes and then passed on, out into the garden. Following him out onto the porch, Maria was certain that her presence would make no difference to her children now. They would not suddenly laugh and look guilty and scamper off to their beds. There, on the grass, illuminated by starlight, they had gathered near Pepe and were holding hands as if ready to begin some somnabulant dance. Their eyes appeared to be focused on something Maria could not see. They looked happy, contented, peaceful, the way children do when they are sleeping. fleetingly, the thought crossed Maria's mind that they looked cherubic.

The children began to move off across the meadow in a northerly direction toward the distant mountains. At first, not believing

that they could really be going away, Maria stood rooted to her place on the porch. Suddenly, with awareness stabbing her frightened confusion, she became all noise and motion, running and calling after them in the terrified realization that her children, all her children, were leaving her. No, not leaving her, being led away from her by an unknown power that she could only think was demonic.

Although they did not seem to be moving quickly, she could not catch up to them; they always seemed to be just beyond her. All at once, then, Rudolpho turned and stopped. The rest of the children continued moving away from her, but she caught up to Rudolpho and threw her arms around him, crooning and pleading. He allowed her to hold him for an instant in a last childish gesture, and then he pulled away. She could not allow him to leave her and her grip tightened. Rudolpho began to struggle and she caught in his eyes a look of frantic anxiety.

"No, no ninito, you must stay; stay here with Mama. Let them go alone. Stay."

No words from her son but again that wild look.

"No, Baby, stay with me. Please don't leave me. Stay here. What can I do if all my babies leave me?" The tears had come now as she held Rudolpho's face between her hands and saw Armando in him: "Please Rudol-

pho." A pitiable wail.

It was Pepe who decided it. He appeared, running back towards the mother and son, leaving the larger group to continue alone. He came back, like a sheep dog, to rescue the lamb. He made no sound but stood just within Maria's vision. And she released Rudolpho. She let him go, running off to rejoin his brothers and sisters. She let him go because of what she saw in Pepe's eyes. He would have destroyed them both if she had not let the boy go.

When Rudolpho had rejoined his brothers and sisters, Pepe left Maria and raced to catch up with the group. She stood rooted to her place and watched as they disappeared.

Hearing the sound of footsteps, she turned and saw the seven Dias children and behind them the Mendozas and the Fuentes. There were more; she knew without seeing their faces that all the children in the colony were coming. Faintly illuminated in the starlight, she saw them. The pets were herding the children and watching Maria as the dog the fox.

She was trapped by her fear of the animals and the mysterious force that drew the children away. She stood silently, like a last sentinel of humanity, until the children had disappeared into the moonless night.

VIII

FIRST THE CHILDREN and now

the men. How can I begin to tell all the misery that has overtaken our people? Who would believe that in all of our village there is never the sound of singing or laughter? Who would believe that even to smile has become an effort beyond hope? I go each day to the grave of Armando, and I have tried to explain the events of the last two weeks to him; but I am afraid that even with the wisdom of the ages he must still be full of doubt and puzzlement.

Our children, the fruits of our lives, are gone. They disappeared into the darkness of this great dismal planet and have not reappeared. They took with them the hopes we had for a future of peace and brotherhood for our people. A village without children is like a village without life. We feel death around each corner and lurking beyond each closed door.

The day after that most dreadful of nights, we met in the village, and the men formed a search party. They all went, with the exception of Father Molina who has stayed behind and prayed almost without rest that the children and their fathers will be returned to us. They took food and camping gear—warm things for they believed they would have to go beyond the mountains to where it is cold—and set out full of hope and even high spirits. We too were hopeful, for how far or how fast can one hundred or so children travel on foot in a land without roads?

But we had forgotten the power of whatever it is that drew our children. Instead of returning in two or three days time, the men have been gone two weeks now. Two weeks and we are all suddenly widows. We do not say it, but we know that they are not returning.

So what are we to do? Father Molina has told us that we must pray for a sign from God; we must be patient and trust in his wisdom. I try to believe; but I must confess that I begin to wonder if, perhaps, LaTierra is not too far from heaven's doors. I think that God has forgotten us here, and Satan has found us. I wish that I could believe that our prayers will reach across the abyss. I want to believe that it is possible, and so I continue to pray.

But what if our prayers are not answered and two weeks becomes two months and then two years? First one and then another of us will die until, eventually, the colony will be deserted. Perhaps one day ships will come from Earth to see if our colony has survived; a ship bearing more colonists might offer to take us back to Earth. Given the chance to go back, I still could not leave. Were I to do such a thing, all the rest of my life I would be haunted by the image of my little ones returning at last to their home and finding it deserted and their mother gone. I will stay here; my bones will whiten beneath this alien sun.

MARIA WAS the first to hear the sound. She heard her children calling her, "Come little mother, come; we are waiting just outside the window, just beyond the fence, over the hills. We are hiding in deep valleys, playing on tall mountains. Come join hands and dance with us."

She awoke with a cry, mournful and deep from her innermost soul, for she knew it was a dream. From the instant it began to break in upon her sleep until it went, she knew it was a dream sent by the Devil to hasten her way into madness. But when it returned night after night, never altering its form or words, she began to wonder and shared her wondering with the other women.

"Maria, you hear the voice of Juanito; but I hear my Paco."

"And Anna cries to me."

"My twins to me."

The women were gathered in the church; at last Father Molina spoke, "This is surely some madness in you for it cannot be that you would all dream the same dream. You are wild from grief and loss; be on guard or you will find yourselves giving more and more time to dreaming and less and less to prayer. And it is prayer which will save us."

"Us. . . us!" screamed one of the women, "Who cares for us if the men and children are gone? With nothing to live for, is it not better to dream than to die? Do

not tell me not to have this dream, Old Man. What do you know of the love of mother for child? What do you know of mourning for a son?"

"I mourn the Son of God, Senora. And if you would know how to deal with grief, ask comfort of His mother."

X

I DO NOT WANT to have this dream for I know that the Priest is right. It is sinful to long during each waking hour for the beautiful dream. But we are all the same. Our houses lie in dust, and we pass each other and do not speak. We kneel at prayers, yawning and fighting the urge to sleep. Father Molina despairs, but I think he understands that he can no longer be of any help to us. I notice that he spends more and more time in silent prayer. I believe that he prays for our souls.

At night, I hear my children calling me to join them. They are happy and laughing and I am sure now that whatever has happened to them, they have not come to any harm. Last night, they called me out into the garden, and I stood in the chilly dampness listening to them as they told me of some new game or dance. I cannot see them and this troubles me. I long to touch them. I must go and look for them.

XI

I AM FATHER MOLINA, and I am

alone here on LaTierra.

The women have gone in much the same way as their children before them. I saw them leave just as I had, on so many nights, seen them standing outside their homes lost in those dreams they spoke of. The strange little animals returned to our village and guided the women away into the darkness. I did not follow; the creatures would not let me. And, in truth, neither would my conscience. I have never known such total loneliness as this, but I could not have left our Lord's House even to save their souls. So now I stay here and spend the daylight hours and most of the night in prayer. I believe now that it was wrong of us to come to LaTierra. I think that He is punishing us for our cowardice, for leaving His Church on Earth. But how were we to know? It seemed a perfect opportunity at the time; in my vanity I saw myself as His missionary to the stars.

In my heart, I am sorrowful; for I have never believed in a punitive God. I have thought that my brother priests before me were in error; and that God's treatment of His children, though sometimes difficult to comprehend, is always loving. To find that He is so harsh in His punishment is painful. It is

this which makes my prayers so important. I must somehow make Him understand that we are not to be punished for leaving the Earth. He must be made to understand that we always meant to do His will.

It has become difficult to pray; perhaps I am going mad living alone like this for so many weeks. I seem to have little or no need for food and rest, and there are times when I must force myself to eat, knowing that if I do not I will not have the strength for prayer. I try not to think of the families that came to LaTierra with me. I think only of their souls. But I find it hard to concentrate. It is as if there is something nagging at me which remains persistent but elusive. I must not think of it; I cannot open my mind to it. I must pray until I cease to be for only then will God know that we did not mean to desert Him and that we loved Him until the end.

THE PRIEST was the only one to hear the sound. Rising from his prayers, he heard the voice of God speaking love and forgiveness and calling him to join Him beyond the mountains. With Pepe for companionship, the Priest wandered off into the mystery.

—DRUSILLA NEWLON CAMPBELL

ON SALE IN JULY FANTASTIC—MAY 21st

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP and LIN CARTER'S greatest NEW CONAN novelet—RED MOON OF ZEMBABWEI. A must for all CONAN fans.

BARRY N. MALZBERG

Barry Malzberg takes us into an altered world of 1962 where the Cuban Missile Crisis has taken on new overtones and John F. Kennedy is not—and never was—President of the United States. . .

OVERLOOKING

Illustrated by JOHN T. SWANSON II

PLAY IT AGAIN, Sam. This time with a little passion if you please; watch the ethos and infuse the shades with light. In that bucolic and paradoxical year of 1951 the Dodgers are leading the Jints 10-0 in the bottom of the ninth of their second playoff game for the National League championship; Labine is sailing right along and it looks bad for the Jints but there is, of course, always tomorrow and Bobby Thomson has been hot these last few weeks. Willie Mays, too. Come back tomorrow and see if the Jints can bring this one off. Across the bridge they are bowling and drinking at Fitzsimmons Lanes across the street from Ebbets' Field; only a few unbelievers are clustered around the twelve-inch television set, watching the Jints in their last throes. Much fun at Fitzsimmons Lanes although the Dodger's collapse these past two months has worried a few of us.

Toots Shor is whooping it up again; flashback back across that

bridge. I believe that it is Toots Shor I see; laughing and trading affectionate insults with the heavyweight champion of the world, the famous and extremely well thought-of Jersey Joe Walcott. Way to go, Jersey Joe. Louis was a better man but you finally caught him on the downswing and beat the hell out of him. Toots passes Jersey Joe a drink. *Shit*, says Jersey Joe or at any rate I think I hear him say *shit*; the conditions in this room are so crowded and then too the sound splicing is awful, out of synchronization with the picture and often fading toward inaudibility, *can't do that man, I'm in training*. Jersey Joe laughs, old Toots laughs, patrons and hangers-on in the area join in the laughter as well and the picture collapses; one moment I am grooving on the sights and sounds of Toots Shor's and the next, the very next, all has gone away on me and I am sitting in the darkness surrounded by unease and the first sounds of vio-

lence. The patrons, an unhappy lot, were pleased and diverted with the film just as was I but now with their palliative gone the original mood has returned and the air, dark as it is, seems dense with the shapes of trouble. "Get that fucking thing on again!" someone screams and, "yeah, I want it to be 1951 again!" a heavy bartender's voice shouts and "you dirty bastards, give us our money back," some entrepreneur bellows and all around me in the theater now, like moths descending to snaffle over my head begins now the sound of feet pounding the floor, curses and boos, the cries and threats of the cheated who feel that they, no less than the tormented Jints, will have one last inning tomorrow. "We want Jersey Joel!" a woman shrieks and throws something at the blank screen. It must be an incendiary. The screen goes up in flame but still it stands inert before us.

It has the outline of a bad scene, a bad confrontation indeed—if the projectionist cannot get things going immediately he better have either an iron door or a quick trap-exit—and like all of these things the aspect of real danger as well; if the patrons cannot obtain satisfaction from management they are as apt as not to turn upon one another. Either way, I want no part of it. Quickly I come from my seat, feeling the damp little deposit from my sweating buttocks part from me like a rapidly batted ball and head



toward the place where I remember an exit as being; the spectators, grotesque, misplaced humps in the dark, do not notice me. The door swings open easily—but soon enough someone will think of locking them in—and I come quickly onto Fifth Avenue, blinking at the sudden onset of cold and the rapid emergence into the world which, for a short, tortured time, I have left. To return to the world so abruptly, without even the satisfaction of an ending to the film and the shuffling, companionable trip up the aisle with the audience as companions, to return to the world so abruptly as I say is unbearable and the Fifth Avenue which I see is surely not the Fifth Avenue I have left but something grimmer, bleaker, intolerably more dangerous than I would have suspected because the world, as compared to the innocent times of 1951 which were reconstructed so briefly for me, seems irretrievably confusing and corrupt. I lean against a theater wall, teetering in the cold, looking with fright as the crowds which whisk by, the young girls particularly intimidating, looking so hard and cruel as compared to the gentle girls of 1951 most of whom saved their bodies for marriage or would have liked to.

A derelict approaches me, the insanity of 1962 stamped deeply into his eyes and brow and says, "Give me a fucking quarter you son of a bitch."

I shrug. It is best not to antagonize derelicts; they are a new and far more dangerous breed than those of the past. "I can't," I say, "I don't have it."

"What do you mean you don't have it?" he says. He shrugs and trembles inside his ill-fitting coat, wipes a fine tissue of discharge from under his nose with a forefinger. "You just came out of that fucking place there, I saw you, I had a watch. You've got a quarter."

"I can't," I say honestly, "I spent my last money to get in there but now the film has broken down and there's going to be a riot."

"Fuck," the derelict says pointlessly, shifting to another topic with that thundering emotional liability for which they are so well known, "son of a bitch is going to bomb Russia and I can't even get a fucking quarter." He rubs his nose again, sniffs; I wonder idly if he is on drugs of some sort. Heroin seems to have become popular in the lower regions of the city during recent years and many tenants of Harlem have particularly been subject to the drug. "Dirty bastards," the derelict says, "all I want is a few dollars so I can get in there, see the films." He points to the theater entrance, the slow lights blinking out from the lobby. "Is that so bad? Get a little pleasure in our last moments?"

"It's no good," I say, moving away from him, "it's black and

white, not color and it's really just the quality of poor newsreels. Besides, the sound failed and I think that the tape itself has lapsed. There's going to be a riot in there soon. I just came to get ahead of it."

"Not fair," the derelict says, rubbing his nose and blowing it frantically into his fingers, "don't care, don't care, I want it to be 1951 *again*. Don't I have a right? In 1951 I was twenty-eight years old; things didn't look so bad. Now what am I? almost forty and picking up quarters while that fucker gets ready to bomb Moscow." He is weeping. "I can't take it any more," he says and sniveling within his coat, walks out of my life forever. I am left standing outside the theatre, hands in my own pockets, shuddering against the cold while within I detect with a fine, attuned ear the first dim sounds of the enveloping riot. It is time to move on.

I move on. I do not want to be part of the crowd spillage; particularly if there are people inside there with incendiaries. MEMORY PALACE the billboard outside says, BE 1951 AGAIN and I feel a dim sense of outrage as I stalk through the wind; what memory palace? What 1951? It is 1962 and the films do not work; here, as in so many other things, they have lied to us. The process was never perfected; now it is something only for fools and indigents. Furthermore, after all the fine promises embodied within his in-

augural address, the President seems insistent upon restoring to us whole all of the myths and cold-war lies of the previous decade during which all of American foreign policy seemed to function only in terms of diabolism. It is disgusting. It is enough to spit. Really, there are great gaps in my own intellectual and academic background but even I can see that American foreign policy, at least since 1917, has been founded upon an insane series of assumptions which have never been tested empirically or, for that matter, put up to the populace for any kind of a reckoning. They are merely there, slow-acting poison like the organic imbalance of the schizophrenic, undetectable, indecipherable, affecting everything, being affected by nothing. Memory palaces have nothing to do with it. The memory palaces were certainly a good idea from the government's point of view: keeping people in the past certainly made their recognition of the present less and kept them in line but if the film is poor, if the sound synchronization is weak, if we cannot concentrate upon 1951 without being reminded of the unbearable 1962 and the other prisoners in that cellblock, what then is the point of it? I decide to think no more. I have fifty cents left in my pocket, enough to get me a four roses, beer chaser, if I head far west enough. Perhaps two if business is slow and I ingratiate the barten-

der. Crises-situations always bring people closer together and being on the brink of an atomic war certainly should make a boiler-maker-on-the-house possible. Prostitutes in building alcoves proposition me in desultory fashion as I scoot westerly but I do not acknowledge them or even slacken my step. Sexuality and stress do not mix for me, never have, and since the great depression of 1955 which drove the then-Administration out of office and on a less cosmic level cost me my career, I have been functionally impotent. Nothing wrong with me the clinic doctor said when after waiting months I finally got an appointment, everything in place but simply not working like an appliance not plugged into a socket. Wait a bit; times will get better and then you should function again. In the meantime, get on along without it and don't unduly expose yourself to challenges. A common problem, more common, than you think. All will work out. That was seven years ago and I still not have had an erection during the daytime except vagrant boners upon awakening, dimly recollected nocturnal emissions. But I do not blame the clinic doctor; the advice was sound and if things did not get better how was he to be blamed? Perfectly reasonable advice. The clinics themselves failed of funding and were ended in 1958. Sometimes I wonder what happened to that doctor.

At length I find myself in a Blarney Stone at Eighth Avenue and 49th Street, just one block south of the Garden but deserted tonight, of course; no events in the Garden for three years other than political rallies. The Rangers were folded I think, the Knicks still in the 69th-Regiment Armory. The dog show upstate; boxing exhibitions in the streets around the Garden all the time, of course but the boxing represented by Jersey Joe Walcott, next to the last of the heavyweight world champions simply does not exist any more. Which, of course, does not bother me. A long time ago I seem to have been trained in the botanical sciences.

The bartender gives me a four roses in a shot glass, no water, ice on the side, a small glass of beer. No seven ounce chasers any more; three ounces, take it or leave it. I take it, take both in two choking gulps that leave me momentarily discombabulated at the bar, soaring high and free beyond the reaches of the Madison Square Garden but then I return to shove the coins across at him and look down the long, empty line of the bar toward the television set which is turned once again to one of the President's crisis-speeches. "Another five cents, friend," the bartender says and then as I look at him with a slow, dismayed come-to-realize (the Blarney Stone along with the rest of the

world simply seems to have gotten away from me), gestures with disgust and walks down the line holding the coins. He whispers something to the old other bartender down at the register and puts the coins away. *Fuck it* I am sure he has said. *Fuck it* I agree and look up at the television. It hardly seems to matter. In his position I would have taken the fifty cents also.

The President has been introduced and is already speaking. The President of the United States is addressing the nation about further moves in the Cuba crises. He must inform us that in the absence of agreement to strike the missile sites at once, an agreement already withheld twenty-four hours from his ultimatum yesterday, he has had no choice but to order the Seventh Fleet and the President's Airforce to move in upon Havana and outlying provinces at once with heavy air strikes. Small-bore nuclears will be employed but the civilian population will be protected to the extent that they now heed his warnings to disperse. If they do not disperse it is their fault for their leaders are being given two hours notice to disperse them. "A presence such as this within ninety miles of our borders is intolerable," the President says and strikes the table with his fist. He appears to be sweating. "We don't have to take this kind of stuff," he adds in a heavy whisper and the camera, mercifully backs

off. "Thank you and goodnight," he concludes as if finishing a horrid secret and while his recorded theme is played the camera pans quickly to the Secretary of Information who says that he would like to add to the President's remarks certain instructions to civilians. A nuclear strike by the enemy himself cannot be entirely discounted and we must be prepared for it although the Secretary of Information hopes, of course, that the enemy will show awareness of the consequences of such action.

The bartenders go to the set and leaning their hands on the high railing look up at the set as if it were on an altar, surrounded by flowers and the dust of incense. They turn the volume up even higher so that they can get the word from the Secretary of Information. But suddenly disinterested I turn in upon myself, cave in upon myself, run my finger through the empty beer glass while an image from the Memory Palace extrudes itself against the fresher memory of what I have just seen and everything, however perilously, at last begins to make sense although in no way that the Secretary would appreciate.

I remember a brief clip of the President, then eleven years younger in that pastoral era of 1951; he was addressing a press conference and reminding us that Hiss, of course, would stop at nothing to save his neck. It was just

a little clip, nothing much to it; the essential orientation of the film we saw was oriented toward sports but suddenly, juxtaposing this against the speech of tonight all comes clear and I see it as I see my finger roaming the inside of the glass (is this a symbolic frigging? I might ask the clinic doctor if he were still around): the President is crazy. He was always crazy. He will be as crazy as this for as long as he lives and his craziness is the world he has

given us.

The thought is momentarily purgative but then it slips like a mask like all of these thoughts do and I realize that it is still 1962 and still the world and still the oncoming nuclear war and nothing to be done about it by any of us until it is over. And the equipment in the Memory Palace does not, did never, properly work. That was government for you.

—BARRY N. MALZBERG

As I Lib And Breed (cont. from page 23)

"Are you threatening me?"

"Yes. If it was Sue's fault, you're the doctor and still responsible. You tell Sue that in spite of her stupidity Cyn's having a baby. That should keep her quiet. And that only leaves your conscience. Now, if your conscience tempts you to open your mouth about any of this, who'll believe you? Where's your evidence? What's more, nothing will keep my mouth shut about Sue's—and your—little error. In fact, I think I'll sue, myself."

There was a long, tense moment while John and the doctor stared at each other. Maxfeldt was the first to lower his eyes.

"I see what you mean," he said weakly.

When they were alone with Alice and her calf, Cynthia gave her husband a little hug.

"You're not such a bad psychologist yourself, John Robert."

John grinned down at her.

"Right, pardner. And now, let's go back to bed."

Cynthia giggled. "This is where we came in," she said.

"No it isn't, Dream Incubator. This time I'm going to sleep. For weeks."

They were opening the back door of the house when a rhythmic bellowing recommenced from the garage. At the same moment Cynthia gave a little squeal and clutched her abdomen. Both sounds were unmistakable.

"You're not going to sleep yet," she gasped. "Right now something tells me we're going to have—I don't know exactly what kind—but twins!"

—J.W. SCHUTZ

ON SALE IN AUGUST AMAZING—JUNE 25th

The beginning of JACK VANCE'S new novel THE DOMAINS OF KORPHON, plus other new stories and features.

A SECOND DEATH

What is a ghost? Is it a creature of superstition, as celebrated in thousands of fantasies over the past several centuries—or could it be a scientifically measureable bioelectrical field?

MICHAEL CASSUTT

I

ANDRE BURICH got off the bus at the corner of Wilmette and Grove, glanced around once for safety's sake (he had been mugged once and had no desire to repeat the experience) and began sprinting for the Butler's Arms apartment building across the street. It was a cold November day, bleak and wet. Burich had a headache from the dampness.

He managed to make it to the building without getting too wet and chilled. There was no doorman, only a guard from the university who waved him through the door. The Arms had once been stylish, but in recent years it had become a haven for the young and transient. It was deserted now, as well.

He took the elevator to the sixth floor and went to room 609. As he opened the door he was greeted with a cursory "Hello, Andre," from Keith Thomas, who was seated at a makeshift console surrounded by various pieces of electronic equipment in the middle of the living room. "Right on time, I see." Burich was at least

two hours early.

"A vice of mine," he replied. "How is she today?"

Thomas shrugged. "Not very talkative. Maybe she's waiting for you." He was a big man, handsome, but perpetually tired-looking. "And since you're here, I'll let you handle things. I'm going to leave: I don't think Dory has seen my unshaven face by daylight for a week." He motioned Andre to the console, got up and began putting on his coat. "Oh, have you seen any of the papers the last few days? I dialed one. Not bad. We were rated the number four news story on the national scene up 'til yesterday morning. I imagine we've slipped a little since then, though." He grinned. "They spelled your name wrong."

"Hell, my parents used to do that. What did the papers say?"

"Oh, what you'd expect. A lot of ridiculous stuff about one more holy icon being shattered by science. . . we've walked shodden on sacred ground. . . we're fucking around with things God never intended Man to fuck around with—"

"—We've taken the mystery out of it—"

Thomas brightened. "You should have been an editorial writer."

"All of us mediums hear that stuff once in a while. We have to keep the Law off our backs, too," he added sarcastically.

"Well, I don't think you have much to worry about; at least, not if you take off your shoes. Say hello to our girl." He left.

At the console, Burich flecked his hands expertly across switches and buttons, lowering the lights in the room, and bringing the equipment up to full power.

A small tv screen in front of him showed a view of the same living room. The screen, however, held a picture of a young girl (apparently in her late teens) seated in the middle of the floor. She was not a beautiful girl, although she might have been considered good-looking. She had very straight blonde hair that fell almost to her shoulders from a centered part. She was dressed in a dirty shirt and jeans.

As Burich watched, the girl faded momentarily, enough so that he could see the couch behind her. He placed earphones and microphone around his head, turned on the transmitter, and prepared to talk to the ghost.

HER NAME was Susan Thomkins. She was a product of the waning years of the Age of Pisces, a sensitive girl to some, a troubled one

to others. She had had problems in her life: divorced parents; later, drugs; most recently, a trial marriage that had expired rather viciously. Whether it was one of those—or all of those—last Sunday she had flown from a sixth floor balcony, aged 19 years and a few months.

It was by chance that her death came two days after the university's department of parapsychology had appealed to the city police for the victim of a violent death to be the subject of some tests.

Monday morning had seen the arrival of several members of the department, Burich and Thomas among them, and their equipment. They soon confirmed the presence of a bioplasmic energy concentration, or, in other words, a ghost.

Monday afternoon saw a departure of most of the tenants of the Butler's Arms, as well as the arrival of several members of the fourth estate and any number of curiosity seekers. The latter had lost interest after the first day. A lawsuit was pending in the case of the former, but was not expected to come to trial for at least three to four years, if ever.

"HELLO, SUSAN," Andre said, reminding himself to look at the screen and not at the room.

—Is that you, Andre? The voice whispered in his ear. Didn't I just finish talking to you?

"That was yesterday."

—Oh. I still have things to get used to.

“How are you feeling today? Dr. Thomas tells me you’re being rather uncooperative.” His words, as he spoke them, were translated by computer into pulses, even as her pulses were translated into words. Audio and video tape recorders caught sound and sight, while the computer, emitting a pulse minute-by-minute, absorbed, recorded, digested.

—I don’t like this, Andre. I really don’t. It’s not right. I’m supposed to be dead and instead I’m having conversations with computers.

Andre was silent for a moment, not knowing precisely what to say. “I imagine it’s rough.”

—Imagine. I remember falling, and I remember the pain, and I remember having nightmares. I’m awake now. But I can’t feel anything, I don’t really hear or see, or really talk. I’m scared. I didn’t want things to be like this.

—Help me, Andre. You’re the only one I can communicate with. You talk to me like I’m a person and not a patient. Help me.

“I don’t know what to do, Susan, I just don’t know.”

II

THOMAS SPOTTED HIM eating breakfast alone in the cafeteria the next morning. He went over to him, and was motioned silently to a chair.

They ate quietly for a few mi-

nutes, then Thomas said, “What’s wrong?”

“What we’re doing,” replied Andre.

Thomas sighed. “Come on, Andre. You sound like some of the mail I’ve been getting. Don’t start mixing morality and science, please.”

Burich didn’t say anything immediately, then said, “It’s not that, Keith. I don’t give a royal rip about us tampering with ‘forbidden knowledge.’ It’s just that I don’t think this experiment we’re doing is good. . .for the subject.”

“I see. How, though?”

“According to Sergeyev and those other Russians, a ghost—a detectable ghost—is a concentration of bioplasmic energy that is out of equilibrium temporarily with the rest of living objects. Eventually, even one that’s really out of balance regains it naturally. Where it goes from there we don’t know, right?”

“And we’re not likely to.”

“Maybe not. Well, suppose that by observing her, we are somehow keeping her from regaining her equilibrium. What then?”

“What, indeed? Do you think we’re keeping her out of heaven? I’m tempted to give the classic reply, ‘Don’t ask me, I only work here.’ It sounds to me like you’re getting a little mystical as well.”

Burich twirled his empty coffee cup. “Maybe I am.”

III

AGAIN, he ran through the rain
(continued on page 126)

It was a cosmic riddle: the Sigma Draconians had lived, flourished, risen to a high civilization, and then vanished into extinction, all within a space of approximately three thousand years! And for the humans puzzling over their remains there was another problem as well—for they too might find themselves in a—

TOTAL ECLIPSE

JOHN BRUNNER

(CONCLUSION)

Illustrated by GRAY MORROW

SYNOPSIS

IT IS THE YEAR 2028, and mankind has, at great expense, achieved star-flight, via qua-space, and discovered Sigma Draconis III.

There had been a high civilization on that planet—one which achieved spaceflight, built a giant telescope on its moon, and vanished, totally disappeared, leaving an empty planet.

The news of this discovery has fueled an exploratory program. In 2022 the nucleus of a permanent ground-staff was landed; it was added to, ten at a time, in 2024 and 2026. Now, in 2028, the first rotation trip has been made, bringing replacements for those who had been on the planet since 2022 and returning them home to Earth.

IAN MACAULEY is one of the replacements. A brilliant anthropologist, his specialty has been to put himself in the place of men in other times and other cultures, and intuitively feel the way they thought and acted.

Another is KAREN VLADY, a civil engineer. On meeting him aboard ship, she had asked Ian, "What's it like to live inside your head?" Taken

aback by her directness he'd replied, "Oh...! Think of a haunted house!"—a statement which was to return to haunt him later.

Also aboard this trip is GENERAL JOSE MARIA ORDONEZ-VICO, a small, neat, dapper martinet with a tiny black moustache, who will return with the ship in order to report on the progress of the research and the feasibility of continuing it. He is not a popular man; he projects paranoia.

In six years the research team has found out frustratingly little about the Draconians. Their appearance is known, after a fashion: bodies like two matching crab-shells, one above the other, four short walking-limbs, two grasping limbs, all tipped with tubular claws down which ran nerve-channels. They apparently possessed a *sensé* similar to that of some fishes—the ability to perceive electromagnetic fields. They have left behind "libraries" of crystals still impregnated with such fields, after the manner of tape recordings. They had a high science, and left behind several quite large city-sites, but these are sparsely distributed on the planet. They left behind artefacts—usually

only one of a kind—one wrecked and sunken ocean-going ship, one large flying machine, one and only one each of many thousands of types of artefact. Much of course is buried—indeed, had not the giant lunar telescope been so prominent it is possible their vanished civilization might never have been discovered.

Among the team at Draco Base are:

VALENTINE RORSCHACH, the Director; LUCAS WONG, head of the Biomedical Section; TOKO NABURA, the communications specialist; IGOR ANDREWSKI, the chief archeologist; and CATHERINE POLYZOTIS, to whom the ship brings the news of the death of her invalid brother, back on Earth.

The General's means of checking out the research wins him few friends, but ultimately—in good part due to an outburst from Ian—he gives the researchers a clean bill and leaves with the ship to promise continued support from Earth. But there are ominous warnings that things are not going well on Earth, and the ship's return in two years is far from certain. . .

At one of the city-sites, code-named Peat (because it is largely buried under peat), an incredible discovery is made: an excavation has revealed a low building, consisting of a hexagonal base some twenty metres on a side, on the roof of which, glistening in the sunshine with vivid blues, reds, greens and yellows, is a statue of a Draconian. The first ever discovered. And, beyond this site, three more buildings, each with an identical statue on its roof. . .

XIII

MYSTERY PILED UPON ENIGMA



now in a manner unprecedented even on this world full of insoluble riddles. Straight away Rorschach summed up the situation and gave orders that accorded with Igor's recommendation: for the time being, their full resources must be concentrated on this particular site, while the others could be left to automatic machines and supervised remotely from the base.

He also instructed Karen to prepare the makings of temporary accommodation and ship them here by heavy-duty hovercraft, and rig extra line-of-sight relays to cope with the enormous mass of data bound to be flooding the computers.

Within five days, the base had effectively been transferred to the peat-site; only a skeleton staff would henceforth remain at the original location.

And even with all their personnel on hand, they found themselves dazed, baffled, confused at the plethora of new discoveries.

It was clear that Ian's brilliant notion of making a simulated Draconian was going to have to be postponed indefinitely. But he didn't regret that fact. It had been intended as a way out of a temporary dead end. Now there was the chance that some other, brand-new avenue of attack might offer itself.

WORKING FURIOUSLY, but hardly daring to stop even when they neared exhaustion, for fears that

the machines might uncover some all-important new object when they were asleep, Igor and Cathy and Sue and Olaf and the rest of the archeological team exposed the matching four buildings with painstaking thoroughness. Meantime, Nadine Shah and Lucas Wong studied the statues with the aid of Ruggiero.

There were indeed four of them, one per building, and as nearly as could be defined they were identical, apart from incidental damage during their long period underground. Why—why—*why* should the first-ever naturalistic sculpture found here be on a monumental scale? These statues were without precedent; not even figurines or dolls had been dug up before.

And then came more unanswerable questions.

As the digging-machines reached the original ground-level, they revealed a surface very like an Earthly pavement, cracked and deformed now but obviously once all of one piece, a poured layer as durable as concrete made of grit bonded in a resin chemically akin to epoxy glue. On it were fragments of roughly cobbled, virtually primitive devices: a wheel and a rod that might have been an axle and a bearing or trunnion that didn't fit it properly, suggesting some kind of simple cart; another, detectable chiefly because of the metal cramps which had held it together when most of its substance, perhaps wooden,

had rotted to leave only smudges of anomalous compounds in the peat, incontestably—so the computer reconstructions claimed—a cross between a barrow and a sled, a container to be dragged along a plain runner, without even one wheel. . .

So out of keeping with the master-craftsmanship of the buildings, let alone the artistic brilliance of those statues!

The entrance to the first building proved to conform to the usual doorless Draconian pattern. Ian and Igor had thrashed out a theory to account for that; suppose, they said, that anything solid enough to be what we would call a door was also solid enough to isolate the occupants from the interplay of electrical fields outside—then it would follow that they'd find the situation intolerable, just as a man shut in a sensory-deprivation tank with neither light nor sound will go insane. Something might once have plugged those openings to conserve heat, but it would have been thin and soft and easily destroyed by time.

Just inside, they made a series of even more astonishing discoveries.

First, they came on a vast printed crystal: ten metres long, almost two metres high, emanating—very weakly, but unmistakably—a single clear pattern of resonance. Then, beyond, they came into a wide open hall, lighted by day from above be-

cause, as it turned out, the material from which the statue on the roof was constructed was translucent, and admitted soft coloured luminance, much like a stained-glass window.

There were objects, artefacts, blocks of crystal, blocks of some kind of plastic, countless things distributed randomly around the floor. But what was most important was that here were also a full score of Draconian corpses, excellently preserved by comparison with any that had been studied before, and including for the first time ever a full range of the species: from a sedentary old female, perhaps already into the dusk of senility, clear down to a baby, no longer than a man's forearm.

Lucas and Nadine shouted unashamedly for joy when they came on this treasure-trove, and instantly set about examining them.

Within a day, they were prepared to state categorically that for the first time the human investigators had tapped into the decadent, pre-terminal phase of the natives' existence.

"BUT HOW CAN you be so certain so quickly?" Ruggiero demanded when they announced their opinions to the assembled company that night over the evening meal. Here, there was none of the comparative luxury to be found at the base; they sat on stools and ate with their plates on their knees,

and all that stood between them and the chill of the night was a two-layer inflatable which Karen had hastily had made from a simple plastic.

Nobody cared.

"Three main reasons," Nadine said. "First, although the soft internal organs were destroyed very quickly by putrefying bacteria just as they would have been at home, something stopped the process before the outer integument was seriously affected, and the actual skeletal structure is virtually intact. We've found what can only have been congenital deformities. Ankylosed joints, for example, particularly in the case of the baby, which exhibits complete fusion of one joint in each forelimb and two other fusions in the walking limbs.

"Second, the associated artefacts. One of them is—was—still clutching what we recognised after a bit of 'that's familiar' as a regular Type H-2 artefact, but carefully ground down to make a knife. Or some sort of cutting-tool, anyway."

"Excuse me," Karen said. "At the moment I've forgotten what H-2 is."

"Glass with embedded strands of something apparently organic, about nineteen or twenty centimetres long."

"Oh, yes. Now I know what you mean. You say ground down?"

"No doubt of it. By rubbing on a smooth piece of rock." Nadine

stretched and suppressed a yawn. "One can still detect traces of the rock in the parallel microscopic grooves that converge towards the sharp end."

"I find the case convincing already," Rorschach said. "But what's your third point?"

Lucas took up the tale. "Even the skin-patterns are preserved," he said. "You must have noticed that when you broke in here, Igor?"—with a glance at the elderly archeologist. "And they're diffuse. Irregular. You might say deformed. While those on the statues are perfectly regular."

"That I'm not convinced by," Igor said. "Why should not they have idealised their monumental statuary? We do."

"Far more important," Olaf Mukerji said, "why *only* monumental statuary?"

"I think I can answer that," Ruggiero said suddenly, and snapped his fingers. "Yes! Ian, you'd be the person to put this idea to, which just this moment hit me. I've been calibrating the properties of the substance those statues are built from, and I can say definitely that it's extremely sophisticated. It doesn't behave the way you'd expect in any band of the spectrum bar visible light. I'm not talking about x-rays or gamma-rays, obviously. But in terms of—oh—ambient electrical fields, above all, it's doing things I didn't think were possible." He set aside his food-plate and hunched forward.

"Could it be that they didn't make statues until they were technologically advanced enough to create a substance that—well, that gave back a signal corresponding to a real Draconian? In other words, until they could make a statue that was life-like in electrical as well as visual terms?"

"It figures," Ian said at once. "Thank you, Ruggiero; I like it! I'll go see if there's any correspondence between the signal from the giant printed crystal and—"

"Tomorrow!" Rorschach boomed as Ian made to rise and leave. "We still have a year and a half before the ship comes back, you know!"

Ian gave a rueful grin and resumed his seat.

"And there's something I propose to do tomorrow, too," Igor said. They all glanced at him. He went on, "We know the Draconians liked areas of high humidity, as one would expect, moist air being a good conductor and dry air a very poor one. Hence, for instance, their neglect of such areas as the high arid plateau where the base is. But I'm wondering whether there are enough data in store for us to recover something about the meteorological patterns of a hundred thousand years ago. It was what Ruggiero just said that reminded me of this point; it occurred to me a few years ago, and there were insufficient data then, and I'd forgotten again until now. Nadine!"

"Yes?"

"You've mainly concentrated on animal life, I think, but I presume you've studied vegetation too?"

She hesitated long enough for Lucas to say, "Of course. We had to from the beginning, to make sure what species were best suited for conversion into food and plastics."

"Now I'm ignorant in this area," Igor said, leaning forward. "But I seem to recall reading that—oh—a forest can change the local climate. Is there any way we can determine whether the Draconians deliberately altered the climate to facilitate their expansion?"

Ian whistled and slapped his knee, and someone behind him clapped hands.

"We should be able to establish that, yes," Lucas said with a pleased smile. "You mean see if the plants associated with city-states form a continuum?"

"More or less," Igor agreed.

"But in some cases we know they did," Nadine said. "We've been assuming that when a species of plant was taken from one continent to another it was for food. We've found, for example, seeds right at this site here which belong to species widespread only on another continent. And even some fairly well-preserved fronds."

"But we haven't specifically checked to see whether any are plants that encourage moisture in the air," Lucas countered. "It's a

useful new line of approach, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes!" Nadine said, nodding. "We'll certainly programme a computer to follow it up."

After that there was a short pause, broken at last by Rorschach, who gave a chuckle.

"Know something? I like you lot! I love working with you. Every time we reach a new plateau of discovery, you can be relied on to mull things over for a while and generate a thousand new ideas in quickfire succession. Lucas, I predict a lot of insomnia tonight. Suppose you ask around and see if anybody wants tranquillising. Me, I'm tired. I'm going to say goodnight—and I'll be the first on the list for a tranquilliser, please, because my brain is whirling like a turbine."

HALF AN HOUR LATER, in the companionable darkness of the tent they were sharing now, Ian said sleepily to Cathy, "You know, you're a better tranquilliser than any that comes in a pill."

She gave him a playful jab in the ribs. "So that's what you make love to me for!"

He chuckled and drew her down close to him. Resting his cheek against the softness of her hair, he said, "In a way, yes. That is why."

"What? What do you mean?"

"Oh. . ." With the arm he didn't have around her shoulders, he made a gesture in the air. "I guess what I mean is that you've

worked a marvellous transformation in me. When I came here I was scared and worried and— and outright terrified, on a very deep level of my mind. Now I'm not. I get dreadfully frustrated now and then, but because you're you and because you decided you liked me, I'm able to digest it and recover and carry on." He hesitated. "What I really mean, I suspect, is that I love you very much."

There was a moment of silence. Then, in a changed voice, Cathy said, "I'm beginning to love you too, Ian. In a way I never felt for anyone before except Dugal. A closeness. A sense of intimacy. 'Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh'. . . Except that it's more 'mind of my mind', if you follow me."

"That's right," Ian said, and hugged her tightly.

Nothing else, for the time being, seemed worth saying, and Ian was almost sure Cathy had dozed off when suddenly she said, "Do you suppose the Draconians fell in love?"

"I don't know," Ian said in surprise. "Maybe. . . No! No, I doubt it, on reflection. If it's true they constantly communicated one with another just by existing, then very probably they'd have been in much the same relationship as a brother and sister, as it were—except, since all females were elderly, it might have been more parental. You loved Dugal, but you never fell in love with

him."

"I see what you mean," she murmured. "The same thing used to happen in a kibbutz, didn't it? At least according to some authorities."

"Right; I ran across that, too. Kids raised in close association, much like members of one large family, tended to be reflexively exogamous. They married out of the community more often than they married within it. And if it's really true that the Draconians expanded smoothly from one focal point, then they would all have belonged to one community, as it were, and the situation would scarcely have been conducive to what we call falling in love."

"Poor things," Cathy said drowsily. "What they missed. . .!"

And, a minute later, she was fast asleep.

XIV

LITTLE BY LITTLE, the same process as usual overtook all the new discoveries: they erupted like lava from the crater of a volcano, and glowed and flowed for a while—longer than at any other stage since humans arrived here, granted, but doomed to the same fate in the end—and finally they cooled into the dull, grey, obdurate mass of another insoluble problem.

It took almost half a year for that stage to be reached, however. Nearly to the midpoint of

his first tour here, Ian was kept abuzz with the continual stimulus of fresh suggestions.

In the other three identical buildings, there were no well-preserved corpses, but there were skeletal remains, and in nearby buildings others were found, many of them being somewhat deformed too. Moreover they kept unearthing more primitive constructs and tools, right on the topmost layer above the pavement, as they moved outward from the centre. It was generally agreed within a couple of months that this could well have been the spot where the last of the race came to huddle and wait for death. Another indication that this was a safe assumption was presented when a skeleton of an old female was found with a hideously deformed embryo's skeleton enclosed in the womb-area; no trace of the hide or internal organs had survived, and a predator or carrion-eater had gnawed the bones, but enough remained in association with each other for the situation to be reconstructed by the computers.

"Is it possible," Rorschach asked Igor and Ian, "that they regarded those statues as some sort of magic charm? Were they dying out because of some dominant harmful mutation, and did they erect the statues as a last desperate appeal to the powers that be? Something idealised, beautiful, glamorous in the strict sense. . .?"

Ian clawed his beard. "It's a

sound speculation," he admitted. "But somehow it doesn't jibe with the impression of the natives' psychology that I'm evolving in my mind."

Igor glanced at him sharply. "Why not? Look, we've established that those huge printed crystals, one at the entrance of each of the four buildings—go ahead and call them temples, I'd say!—each of the four resonates a single loud pattern. To the Draconians they must have been as deafening as a siren!"

"True enough, and the pattern is very simple and very clear," Ian conceded. "But the whole sequence of their development runs counter to the idea. They seem to have hit on a grand plan, and stuck to it for about three millennia, and collapsed so abruptly that they were back to the simplest and most primitive devices in the blink of an eye. Now I simply can't make myself believe that if they'd been handicapped by belief in capricious supernatural beings they'd have achieved what they did. And for the notion of gods or fate or what-have-you to appear at the very last moment. . . . No, it rings false."

"Unless they did have religious convictions right back at the beginning, discarded them, and retained only the memory of their existence as a historical curiosity," Rorschach offered. "That might explain why they re-appeared at the eleventh hour."

"Ye—es. . . ." But Ian still

sounded doubtful. "I'll add it to my computerised hypotheses, see if the machines can come up with any pointers to it. But I can't in good faith assign it a high priority."

"I'm not asking you to," Rorschach murmured. "It's just that for the first time since we discovered Ash I have time on my hands. Everyone is so busy, they aren't creating administrative problems."

"Just as well," Igor grunted. "Problems of our own would be superfluous, given the quantity we've had wished on us by the natives."

OCCASIONAL BREAKTHROUGHS continued. It was with high delight that Nadine came to report spinoff from Igor's remark about plants that would tend to keep the local humidity high.

"We ran a complete review of all our data about the vegetation," she announced. "Not only does your idea check out, Igor, because we've discovered something that's been right under our noses and should have been spotted long ago, but we got a bonus with it."

She had come upon them while they were impatiently waiting for the digging-machines to remove another metre-thick layer of the cover; at this depth, the decayed vegetable matter was so compressed that it was lignitic, on the way to becoming coal, and the task was proceeding slowly.

"Well, tell us all about it," Igor invited, leaning back against the rail of the catwalk spanning the now enormous pit.

"First off, we discovered that there was a genetic explosion among the plant-life here just about a hundred thousand years ago." Nadine paused impressively.

"Do you mean,," Cathy ventured, "that some common cause led to the plants and the animal-life mutating?"

"No, that's too wild a guess. What it does look like, is proof that the Draconians practised selective breeding of crops. It was to be expected, given their use of bioelectronics, but for some idiotic reason we never actually sought out the evidence before. Igor, we're obliged to you."

Igor waved the compliment aside. Ian said, "You're talking about—oh—the kind of process which evolved wheat from wild grass?"

"Exactly. But not just that. Let me get on to the bonus. It's far more than just proof of something we should have thought of before. Enough unaltered substance remained in the corpses we found over there"—Nadine gestured towards the first of the four identical buildings, now referred to as "temples" despite Ian's misgivings on the matter—"for us to conduct some comparative studies on the germ-plasm of the Draconians, and that of the contemporary fauna. Care to guess what we

came up with?"

The others exchanged blank looks. Ian suggested, "Proof of selective breeding among animals, too? But surely you'd expect that. We know the Draconians were primarily herbivorous, don't we? But that needn't have prevented them from breeding pets, or the counterpart of milch-cows!"

"Yes, we did find evidence of that, naturally!" Nadine brushed the point aside impatiently. "But we finally know that they deliberately tailored both plants and animals for use as tools!"

STUNNED SILENCE greeted the claim. Eventually Ian said faintly, "How the *hell*. . .?"

"It's very technical, I'm afraid," Nadine admitted. "I left Lucas trying to figure out how it can be made clear to a non-specialist because I wanted Igor to be the first to hear about the discovery. Basically, though, what it amounts to is that in several species, both animal and vegetable, we've found organs that appear to have little or no evolutionary purpose. You know we have automatic samplers drifting with the ocean currents all the time, studying aquatic life, and we've been collecting data on land long enough now to have a very good idea of the evolutionary chain here: sometimes amazingly like ours, sometimes taking an unexpected detour, sometimes seeming to jump a stage which on Earth gave rise to a whole complex of life-

forms. Well, it occurred to me"—Nadine gave a modest cough—"to check whether these anomalous extra organs, which don't appear in the more primitive forms even in embryo, as it were, might be sensitive to electrical fields. They are, all right. We have a whole assortment of different plants in the lab right now, and Lucas is playing field-patterns at them, derived from those printed on your crystals, Ian, and they're reacting."

"Hey!" Ian said. "I'm going there right this minute! You two tell me if you find anything equally important—cancel that! Ten times as important!"

"YES," Lucas said in a didactic tone, "Nadine's right. It looks as though these plants here may be descendants of the earliest counterpart to the bioelectronic system we found on the moon."

He pointed at the array on the lab-bench at the end of the room. The plants, in ordinary plastic pots, were an unremarkable selection of commonplace enough species, but two automatic electronic devices were sliding along a rail above them, somewhat as though the recording and replay heads of a tape-recorder were to be moving while the tape remained still. A computer display on another wall made it clear at a glance what was happening. The first of the devices "played" an electrical field over the plants, in a pattern derived from randomly-

chosen printed crystals; the second, following about a minute later, detected that the field had been impressed on the plants and was resonating in the mysterious organs unrelated to evolutionary need which Nadine had spoken of.

"Very interesting," Ian said, thoughtfully, and made to take a closer look. Lucas checked him.

"No, keep away, please. You can't see it from here, but there's a fine mist of water playing all over the bench—a sort of miniature fog—to improve conduction, and I don't want a two-metre pillar of water to cause disturbances in the field!"

Ian chuckled. After a pause, he said, "Tell me, have you thought of any use these plants could have been put to?"

"Be reasonable," Lucas countered. "We only just discovered that the phenomenon exists; it's far too soon to start guessing why."

"I was just wondering about the wall-niches we keep finding in all the cities here," Ian murmured. "Every last one, I believe, contains some organic trace. Could the plants have anything to do with that?"

Lucas pursed his lips. "That's a very sensible suggestion," he said. "Nadine dear, would you—?"

But she was already punching the nearest computer read-in.

Two minutes, and she reported, "We'd have to let a few sample plants rot, or bake them in an

oven or something, to simulate a decay-process, but if you asked me to give an advance opinion, I'd say—yes. Plants like these could very well have been placed in those niches."

"Hmm!" Lucas regarded Ian with respect. "I've been told over and over that you have amazing insights now and then, but this is the first time you've favoured me with the benefit of your talents. I'm impressed. Tell me more. What purpose could they have served?"

Ian spread his hands, blushing vivid red. . . much against his will, but it seemed to be a reflex he was doomed to endure until the end of his days.

"I can think of myriads of possibilities. As to the interior ones. . . Well, how about amplification of natural signals? They could well have needed a communication or data-processing system, the way we use phones and so forth. As to the outdoor ones, they could be anything from weather-detectors to—to route-indicators, signposts for people wanting to visit another city! Or they could identify an address, or they could relay news of public importance, or they could—" He broke off, grinning. "You go on!"

Lucas gave an answering chuckle. "Yes, I take the point. Talk about being premature. . . Still, we now have something really concrete to work on. It would be even better if you were to crack the language for us,

though." He gave Ian a keen glance. "Making any progress in that area?"

"I'm afraid not. I've turned most of it over to the machines, you know. Sifting the well-printed crystals for the sort of patterns that might give us a clue because they recur in identical contexts would be difficult enough for a team of a hundred experts; for me, virtually single-handed, it's ridiculous. But there is one thing that's becoming alarmingly clear." He scowled, looking into nowhere.

"What?" Nadine demanded, coming to stand at his side. \

"There's the most amazing degree of resemblance from one crystal to another. I mean, almost to the point where you could believe they were originally identical and have just been altered by the passage of time."

"But I thought—" Lucas began, and checked, biting his lip.

"You thought they varied tremendously one from another? So did I!" Ian sounded rueful. "Unfortunately it turns out that much of the contrast from one to the next is due—or at any rate ascribable—to the in-built piezo effect, which you know about, I think."

They both nodded.

"Constant pressure, from varying weights of overlay, has superposed an irrelevant signal on each crystal. Now I've managed to programme the computers to eliminate this chance effect, every

approximation brings me closer to an underlying identity. It's infuriating! But it does prove one thing: we don't have to do with anything like a book, or a recording of music. What we actually do have, though. . . Any ideas? It would be a fair trade if you gave me an insight too, hm?"

Lucas and Nadine stared at one another. Eventually Nadine said, "But if they were originally identical, why have so many of them?"

"You tell me!"

Lucas shook his head. "No, I have no ideas at all. All I can think of at the moment is my own problem."

"I thought you'd just solved one," Ian said with a smile.

"Which, as usual, has dragged another in by the tail." Lucas leaned back against the edge of the nearest bench, his plump haunches deforming against the hard square metal.

"Right now the likeliest theory we have about the fate of the aliens is that they were overtaken by a deleterious mutation. Correct?"

"It's the leader by a mile," Ian grunted.

"In that case, given what we've just demonstrated about their knowledge of genetics—their ability to modify plants and probably animals to use as scientific instruments—how in the whole wide galaxy could they have overlooked and failed to cope with a mutation in their own germ-plasm that was obviously apt to exterminate them?"

nate them?"

Lucas shook his head with an expression of pure incredulity.

"It makes absolutely no sense to me. Not a sliver! Not a smidgin!"

XV

THE LAVA of hot new ideas solidified into a grey dull mass just about at the same time as the rainy season arrived, and a huge gloomy inflatable dome had to be erected over the peat-site. The drumming of the continual downpour, which would last for at least forty and probably more like fifty days, was no more welcome for being inevitable; it seemed like a ruffle of funeral drums.

Rorschach therefore decreed that it was time to return to main base and hold the monthly review conference there, in the hot sunlight which all of them had so often complained about, but which at least did not possess the mind-dulling quality of this steady monotonous downpour.

His judgement, as usual, was accurate. When the first session of the conference assembled, people were already looking a lot happier, thanks to luxuries that were not available at the temporary base on the mainland, such as sonic cleansing machines for their clothes—they had been doing their laundry the ancient way, with water and detergents—beds that were better than sticky inflat-

able oblong cushions, and a far wider choice of diet than the portable food-converters could supply.

Heard in this context, so comfortingly redolent of faraway Earth, the summary initial accounts of progress from each successive department seemed more impressive. It was as though, out at the peat-side, one felt dominated by the past. Here there was the chance to rediscover a belief in the future.

Ian pondered that until the time came for him to give his own report, and then repeated more or less what he had already told Nadine and Lucas. It did not sound much better than before; still, he could comfort himself with the argument that even negative knowledge was useful.

When everybody had concluded what they had to say, Rorschach took a sip of the beer he had before him in a stein which Karen, on the spur of the moment, had had made for him on discovering that this conference coincided with his fifty-fifth birthday, and said musingly, "One thing strikes me, listening to you all."

They looked expectant.

"You seem to be talking as though you've reached a dead end in every last area. I'm puzzled. To me, it sounds more as though you're making constant breakthroughs."

"Valentine?" Igor said, gesturing.

"Yes?"

"You're nearly right in what you say." The elderly chief archaeologist hunched forward, cupping a glass of wine between his hands. "Naturally, as a result of discovering our very splendid identical buildings—out of deference to Ian, I won't call them temples!—as a result of that, we have indeed made a hell of a lot of progress. But. . . !"

He sipped his wine before resuming.

"But," he said again, more forcefully still, "we're caught in a vicious-circle process. True, we know far more about the natives than we expected to half a year ago; we've been amazingly lucky, which is another way of saying we've kept our eyes and minds open and responded when something turned up. On the other hand, though, precisely because we have collected so many new facts, we have many, many more combinations we can make of them. Each of us, in our own way, could be regarded as having the same problem that Ian does: so long as we are simply gathering data, without a tentative framework to hang them on, we're going to go on being frustrated more than we're pleased. I therefore wish to move that we revive Ian's plan to build a simulated Draconian and see if we can develop a strong hypothesis, on the basis of his recommendations, against which to test what we think we know."

"Seconded!" Cathy said promptly from her place at Ian's side.

"Before I invite the meeting to discuss the motion," Rorschach said, "what does Ian think?"

Ian pondered a long moment before replying. He said, "I'm willing, if people don't think it would take up too much time and distract us from Peat."

Ruggiero raised his hand. "I don't see how it could," he said. "Igor's right: simply making a grand pile of data is ridiculous. By now we ought to have enough to start fitting them together. Ian's approach to that seems to be the only valid one so far put forward."

"Does anybody disagree violently?" Rorschach inquired, and when nobody else spoke up continued, "So resolved, then. Abdul—Karen—would you two make yourselves responsible for finding out what's been worked out by the programme we left running to design a simulated native, and report back tomorrow? We can constitute ourselves a ways-and-means committee and start estimating how long the project will take. Ian, how long do you reckon on spending—uh—in disguise?"

Ian shrugged. "Certainly a month or two, possibly more. But if any of us has reached a genuine dead end, it has to be me; I literally have no ideas at all of where I can go from here. The more I study the printed crystals, the more certain I become that if they

were not absolutely identical, they may have differed in such subtle ways that time has wiped out the crucial information. So I'd better simply say: as long as necessary."

"Beg to differ," Lucas said mildly. "You're not going to cut yourself off from us indefinitely. Sorry. I simply won't permit it. You'll be monitored constantly, and medically examined at regular and frequent intervals. Say, at least every month. And you'll signal daily from wherever you are. By the way, where would you go? Obviously there's too much happening at Peat."

"Yes, of course," Ian said. "I was going to pick Ash. It's nearly as well preserved, and it's been a long time since anything unique turned up there, so withdrawing the machines for a while wouldn't cause any real problems. Yes, I'd say Ash."

"I think we should consider building two simulacra," Cathy said. "Ian, wouldn't it make things easier? I mean, if these people interacted constantly, being alone—"

"With you inside the other one, you mean?" Ian interrupted. He shook his head, smiling. "Sorry, no. If the trick can be worked—which I'm not promising—I'll have to do it by myself. Having another mock-native around who was thinking human would be less than helpful. . . particularly if you were my partner. It could cause all sorts of—uh—distractions!"

"Pity," Cathy said, leaning back. "But I take the point."

WHEN EVERYBODY was called to the important new discovery at Peat, a programme had been left on standby status in the base computers, instructed to compile all relevant data including new additions and develop a design for the simulacrum. By now it had incorporated information based on the four statues, and when they tapped into the result they found the design complete except for a couple of finishing touches. Inevitably it was in the male phase; computer reconstruction of the elderly female found recently had shown what Nadine had long suspected, that when fertilised and gravid the natives became virtually sessile, capable of moving only short distances if at all without assistance. Many of the contemporary fauna followed the same pattern, so it was scarcely surprising.

There were all kinds of interesting implications in that which Ian planned to think through when he launched out on his lonely adventure into the mind of another—long extinct—race.

GRADUALLY the simulacrum started to take shape; first they constructed the skeleton with its cleverly-articulated joints and then they inserted within it a cradle to support Ian and a miniaturised power-pack capable of driving it indefinitely provided

it received at least four hours of bright sunlight per day. This was nothing Ian could help with, except to go and "try it on" occasionally like a suit of clothes. He spent most of his time for the next several weeks being repeatedly hypnotised by Lucas, first with the help of a drug, then without. He proved to be an apt subject.

Then came the question of the machine-man interface. It was very difficult to devise means of making Ian feel the motion of six limbs instead of four. . .but Nadine suggested a solution. Evolutionarily speaking, the manipulating appendages of the natives weren't legs at all, but more akin to lips, changed in much the same way as an elephant's nose changed into a trunk. She suggested making the grasping limbs mechanical, but with direct connections to Ian's face and chin, a proposal that Ian promptly approved.

That left him with the four legs reporting as though he were quadrupedal. . .but not moving, and that gave Lucas headaches. He was much worried by the risk entailed in having Ian's real limbs motionless for so long; he talked about cramp, chafing, atrophy. There were cures for all, but fitting them into so narrow a compass was another matter.

It was Ian himself who suggested that into the sensors which were going to be attached to his skin and report heat and cold and

other tactile data they should incorporate tiny stimulators based on those used to maintain muscle-tone in people temporarily paralysed. Tests showed that that was feasible. Good tone was maintained during a forty-eight hour test, and circulation remained excellent. He emerged a trifle stiff, but pronounced himself otherwise very satisfied.

Next they solved the problem of making him react to external electrical fields in as nearly as possible the same way as a native animal. Ruggiero spent a long time on that and triumphantly produced a marvel of light-weight engineering: sensors and generators—to bathe Ian in his own field and make him aware of it much as one is aware of a nose, visible but ignored—were combined into tiny flat pads that would rest on his bare skin and signal ambient currents in the form of pressure.

Rorschach's hasty idea of making use of the magnetic response of the retina was ruled out as potentially very dangerous, but since the discovery of the four statues it had become clear that the natives had had a keen colour-sense and no doubt regarded it as important, perhaps in a manner parallel to the way humans regard pitch and timbre: not the most, but the next-most, important means of garnering information about the world around.

Each time Ian put on the simulacrum, he reported to Lucas

how well he was responding to the sensory inputs, and Lucas selected what aspects he could reinforce by hypnosis. In an astonishingly short time, less than three months, Ian was beginning to dream in a mode he had never experienced before. On waking, he recalled not visual images, but patterns of swirling warmth, cold, pressure, near-pain. . . not actual pain, just a sensation that was very, very disturbing.

And very exciting, too.

ON THE NIGHT before the simulacrum was due to be put to the ultimate test, a full-scale month-long trial at the Ash site, Cathy said wistfully into the darkness of the room they now shared, "I do wish you could make me understand how it feels, Ian. I'm getting quite envious of you."

"If I could tell you, I would," he answered soberly. "And in a little while, I expect I shall be able to. Already I can draw analogies."

"For example. . . ?"

He hesitated, then gave an unexpected chuckle. "I don't know whether what I have in mind works for women as well as men—and doesn't it make my project seem ludicrous, when I'm setting out to think like a Draconian and I don't even know something quite commonplace about the other sex of my own species?"

"Stop beating about the bush, will you?" She pinched his arm.

"Would you believe that pinch feels solid, but magnetically permeable, and about eighty kilograms in mass ten centimetres away?"

She whistled softly. "Ay-ay-ay! You mean that literally? That's the way it really feels to you?"

"Yes, even without being put into trance."

She hesitated a while, and eventually said, "I was talking about you to Karen the other day. Is it true that when you first met her you said your brain was like a haunted house?"

"Yes. Not in any frightening way," he hastened to add. "More. . . More it's that I sense overtones. Echoes. Implications." He waved vaguely to embrace a world of possibilities. "But I never dreamed I'd make so many cross-associations from one sense to another as I can with the mock-Draconian."

"I believe you," she muttered. "What was the thing you said you don't know about women?"

"Oh!" He laughed aloud this time. "Well, when you have to wait a long time before relieving yourself, do you get a sort of upside-down pain when you finally let go?"

"Yes!" She started upright on the bed. "I know just what you mean! 'Upside-down pain'—I never thought of expressing it like that, but it's exact! Know something?"

"Mm-hm?"

"If you can capture a sensation that vividly in a neat new phrase. . ." She lay down again, seeming thoughtful. "I guess I don't have to be worried about what's been bothering me. Maybe it's doing you an injustice—in fact, now I'm sure it is—but I have been wondering how you'd explain to the rest of us what came of your experiment if you honestly did start to think in Draconian patterns. I see how, now you've given me an example. I'm glad. It's taken a weight off my mind."

"That kind of 'upside-down pain'," Ian said, "indicates a tremendous mass with very low magnetism all around, like a big building. I had it very intensely in the refectory. . . Hell, what am I doing rambling on at such length? I ought to be doing something entirely different that I may not have the chance to do again for months!"

He rolled over towards her. Some time later she said, close to his ear, "At least I can be sure of one thing. No matter how efficient the simulacrum is, you're not going to leave me for some dowager Draconian, are you? Still, you might see if they could have offered humans any hints!"

XVI

HE WOKE into a different universe.

For a while he waited, digest-

ing the impact of his surroundings at the site named Ash—

It doesn't have that name. It has no name. Moreover I am not called Ian Macauley. I am "I", but in a sense less than that. Others flow and interact even though they are not here.

He wrenched his mind away from contemplation of things that related to being human (though a Draconian had no knowledge of other intelligence, *a priori*, so would think a concept meaning human, of my own kind), and spent many minutes exploring his surroundings without moving. It was almost dark in this place; nonetheless he knew exactly what there was here. With sudden surprise he realised that the walls and floor tingled, though the ceiling/roof did not.

Hmm! Why. . . ? Ah: iron traces in the material used to build it.

He carefully avoided thinking: *that they built it with.* The whole goal and purpose of this test was to strip away every element of his thinking that related to a species which would not visit this planet for another thousand centuries.

When he was satisfied that, despite the low light-level, he knew to within a centimetre or so where the walls and the entrance were, he shut his eyes and found his way to the latter by non-touch, by the little tickles and light sensations of pressure which were fed into his skin and hence to his nerves by the miniaturised transducers in his. . . *body.*

His practice at the base stood him in good stead. He was over-large compared to the vanished inhabitants of this city, but he steered a precise course through the doorway, then along a passage, and then into the open air, where he halted to conduct another review of his surroundings. He did not bump or scrape the walls, even with eyes closed.

This was his talent, the thing he could do better, perhaps, than any living man: learn another mode of thought. But until now those other modes had always been, at bottom, human and consequently not very far removed from his ordinary processes of mentation. They might swarm with godlings and evil spirits and mistaken notions of the nature of the air and the land and the oceans. . . but they could be reached by merely peeling away modern sophistication and substituting artificial naïveté. Hands remained, eyes, belly, gonads.

Now it was necessary for those to be shed too, and in their place would have to come alien senses, alien likes and dislikes, alien imaginings. Perhaps it was impossible.

Still, it was starting well.

HE HAD EMERGED from a small building, purpose unknown, at the western side of a large open space: a market, perhaps, because charred vegetable remains had been found under the layer of volcanic débris. One could hazard

a guess at some kind of display-table, fixed or mobile, on which were arrayed plants. . . for sale?

Good question. What did these people do to organise their trade? Did they trade? It seems very probable. Here in the centre of a great city, with its pavements of grit-in-glue, there would have had to be food. They ate vegetables. No plants in quantities large enough to provide nourishment for a million-strong population could be grown within kilometres of here—

He checked that thought, too. A kilometre was a meaningless measure now. Strike that and replace it with “as long a distance as I could walk in a quarter of a day,” or something of the sort.

His eyes were still shut, but he could discern the change from interior to exterior very clearly. Overhead, a vast nothing; underfoot, another tingling surface, but different in character from what he had awoken to. (Yes, the Draconians would have slept; he'd made sure about that, confirming that contemporary animals did so. Lucas had lectured him exhaustively on the inevitable incidence of sleep among creatures with highly-organised nervous-systems. . . *Stop! No such person as Lucas!*)

Close at his back, the wall of the building he had left with the doorway-gap in it; to right, left, and in front, other walls, also-with gaps where streets/alleys ran (and he consciously imposed awareness

of four walking limbs, not two, on that metaphorical “ran”), casting back at him a sort of radar-echo. . . except it was not a pulse-emitted-echo-received sensation, it was a there-it-is sensation, perfectly continuous.

He thought in delight: *Oh, they've done a fantastic job for me!*

And cancelled that along with every subsequent recollection of humanity.

Next, then, a fleeting problem.

Whom do I thank for having been created as myself?

Too early to start investigating the subtlest, least conscious aspects. Too early to wonder about parental-filial relationships. Sufficient for the moment to try and picture in imagination the busyness of this (?) market.

People. Instead of a clear signal of that distant wall, a multiple hum of pressure (as it were) moving and intertwining. . . good, yes, must have been a bit like that. (A flicker in his mind, based on the tingling of his skin, making a pattern that hinted at comprehensibility.) Some reference to hunger, perhaps? If food-stuffs were (?) sold here, did I come out to break my night's fast?

File that as entirely possible but unconfirmed!

Now, having completed his imaginary picture, he opened his eyes and saw the present reality: a greyish-white expanse of hard ground, blank to the new daylight.

Vacancy.

Yet not still, not inactive. Hereabouts, at this season, the weather was clement: humidity high, conductivity excellent. No electrical tension in the low over-cast. In a word—fine.

He began to move, and at random made for a southerly exit from the open space. In a little while he realised he was going downhill, towards a level where excavation had revealed the bed of a former river. The Draconians had liked to have a river running through their cities. Unsurprisingly. As he went, he pictured (?) modified plants in wall-niches, signalling to him: directions? News? Knowledge of some sort, very likely.

But now the river was dry. Its course had been re-made by the volcano's lava—*stop! Not for centuries yet! It is a river for me, it's water, I'm getting the right impulses because I'm sure, absolutely sure, I'd head for a damp area if I had no obligation to do otherwise.*

Following which, a question which later grew to be crucial:

When would I have no obligation to do otherwise. ...?

That too, though, was excessively subtle to be considered this early in the project.

THE DAYS PASSED, and by gradual stages his conception of life as a Draconian rounded out, took on detail, became colourful. He grew able to discard words from his

thinking and replace them with "equates-to-tingle-pattern"... but he was mostly unaware that this was happening, except during the one hour each evening when, under posthypnotic compulsion, he returned to his "home" and ate human food and used a human-built device to report that he was well and happy.

He did not talk, even then. He simply pressed a button that activated remote sensors in his body, and a cross-section of their impulses was flashed to a satellite and thence to the main base.

The chief question after the first ten days or so was a simple but incredibly difficult one: *What do I do?*

Initially he was quite content to accept that Draconians thought, reflected, considered, invented, more than (suppress this) human beings. Would perhaps take a long while over a private plan, then implement it and see it succeed first time.

But additional insights conglomerated into a whole, and new ideas were spawned. . .

Spawned?

In all the places where, obviously, there had been great activity (market?, laboratory?, library?, *****?), he kept recalling that there was active-male, passive-female, and. . .

(Now he was losing words more and more; the transition to symbols that weren't symbols, but called up to consciousness real-

time physical sensations, was gathering momentum, and the experience was giddy but vastly exciting.)

And I'm going to make the change myself.

FRIENDS? Yes, of course—that is, persons whose patterns strike a chord of recognition. Fifteen days, nearly twenty (but I count, most likely, to a base two. . . I suspect) and I never spoke to anybody, never interacted!

A night of dreams of horrible, fearful, unspeakable loneliness—

Click.

I KNOW who I am. Suddenly I'm quite sure who I am. I'm neuter. No wonder my friends won't talk to me right now.

I've lived the active part of my life. What I was able to do, with complete mobility, is done. I am growing slower and more awkward in my movements (I feel I move awkwardly, there are deep aches, deep as my bones, penetrating me like blades) in spite of. . .

Did I try and stave it off? Yes, I think so. There is advanced modern medicine, practised solely by my friends the active males. In olden times it was taken for granted, the changeover; now, nothing is taken for granted at all—we fly, we shoot to the moon, we work miracles, thought out beforehand.

Yet and still, there is an eventual limit. With what to be looked

forward to?

He puzzled that, pondered it, grew so frustrated he wanted to weep. . . except that that wasn't right. Tears-eyes: of secondary importance. Instead, a discernable change in the body-field. Causing others to shy away! Yes, yes! *Anger!*

But, again: what to look forward to? Surely something, some compensation, some consolation (what was that? Compensation. . . ? Like an itch in the brain, can't be scratched but one desperately wants to!)

It had turned out that the use of the pronoun "one" instead of "I" was infinitely more apt.

AS THOUGH resigned already to completing his life in a stiff sessile mode, he spent long hours at the side of the dry empty river, among no-longer-existent plants that clung to its muddy banks, feeling the soothing caress of the current by force of will, groping—creeping—striving towards acceptance of senility . . . but not that yet. Between now and then some climax, some repayment for the sacrifice of activity, some reward, something.

He often felt giddy, disoriented, at a loss. Until it was treated, he had suffered migraine during childhood, and knew the obsessive-compulsive repetition of a single random phrase which typically associated to the onset of his aura. Now he was being infuriated

by concepts revolving around a centre: reward for, compensation for, reimbursement for, just fee for, look back on and feel satisfied (in a crazy confusion, a garbled blend of apprehension and assurance)—

Insurance?

Frustrated not because of the change of life which is the fate of us all, but because somehow I didn't—make provision properly?

?

IT ELUDED HIM, like a darting fish, like the rainbow's end (pot of gold but makes no sense, I know what a pot is but gold is for use, it's a superb conductor and I don't care that it's yellow because more importantly I feel its nature) or like those ballonet-borne treetop-sleeping creatures that soar landward on the morning breeze, seaward again after sunset.

Frustration stretched out over days and days turned easily to thoughts of: competition, being done down, being out-maneuvred. . . but just a second, we don't do that, do we?

Do we?

Once again, painfully and slowly from the top: we begin as babies, we grow to functional active males, we undergo a neuter transition lasting about a year, we spend a much shorter time as fertile females, we lapse into ultimate senility and—

GOT IT!

BUT THERE WERE strange hideous

creatures before him, and he cowered in terror. Things like plants, moving: vertical things, horrible, with too few limbs, impossibly balanced on stalks that planted and rooted and planted and brought them swiftly towards him even though he tried to flee. They caught up, they surrounded him, they uttered some kind of atmospheric vibration that meant nothing and—

IT WAS the infirmary at the base, and Cathy was there at the side of this—this bed he was stretched out in, and by the door (how odd to block an entrance like that, with a solid object!) Lucas Wong, and also present, Rorschach.

"He's waking up!" Cathy exclaimed.

And before the others had a chance to do more than react, he cried out, "Why did you stop me? I was so close—I was so *close*!"

"What you were close to," Lucas said, "was death."

"But I— What?" The word struck through the artificial garb in which he had dressed his mind.

"You nearly died," Lucas emphasised. "You caught a local disease, one of the rare ones that can infect human tissue. When we came to rescue you, you were running four degrees of fever and you hadn't eaten more than a mouthful in three days. You were delirious. You've been lying here unconscious for nearly a week."

"But I was so close!" Ian re-

peated piteously. "It was all starting to come clear. You've got to let me go back, right away."

"No," Rorschach said, taking a pace towards the bed. "And that's final. It's too dangerous, Ian. What good would it be if you went the same way as the natives?"

"But it wasn't disease!" he exclaimed. "It was. . . It was. . ."

And found he could no more remember the truth he'd stumbled on than a vague and shadowy dream.

XVII

IT WAS VERY QUIET in the base's medical-inspection room. Elsewhere on the planet there were creatures that buzzed and crawled and stridulated after the fashion of Earthly insects, but on the high desert plateau there were none to speak of.

Sunlight slanted stark through the big windows, gleaming on sterile metal shelves and furniture, but the chair where Ian sat was in shadow. Before him Lucas Wong, on a high stool, leaned intently forward, while a short distance away in another chair Valentine Rorschach waited impatiently for the result of this experiment.

"If it's true"—so Lucas had argued—"that Ian really was on the verge of a breakthrough when we had to rescue him, then it must have been something he fig-

ured out while he was under hypnosis. Among the tricks you can play with that technique is artificial enhancement of the memory. When Ian is better, we'll simply put him back in trance and interrogate him."

And today was the day to try it out.

Rorschach watched with curiosity as Lucas passed his hand once, twice, a third time over Ian's open eyes, fixed on a bright reflection from a mirror angled to beam at the opposite wall. When this was being done in preparation for Ian's month at the Ash site, he himself had been too busy tying together the complicated strands of the simulacrum-building project to come and watch. But right now everything was, if not at a standstill, then at any rate proceeding with a sort of leisurely slackness, as though over the months since Ian's arrival people had grown over-used to leaning on him as a source of bright new suggestions, and were marking time in the expectation that he would indeed reveal the answer to the mystery of the natives.

He was worried.

"Your eyelids are growing heavy," Lucas murmured. "You feel sleepy so-o-o sleepy. . . When I count to three, you will relax completely, you will close your eyes, you will drift away, you will hear nothing but my voice. . ."

He droned on soporifically.

Rorschach's mind wandered again, recalling how eager Ian had been throughout his period of convalescence, how frustrated he had seemed—clear to the point of breaking out in fits of blind rage—at not being able to recapture the dazzling insight he claimed he had achieved.

For a week or more he had been insisting he was well enough to stand the strain, and Lucas had contradicted him with the evidence of his medical computers to back him up.

Rorschach himself was nearly as excited. He kept rehearsing the comment Rudolf Weil had made, and he had always respected Weil's judgment. This, the colonel had said, was the person he would bet on to decipher the native language.

In so short a time. . . ?

But it wasn't so short, not really. Back on Earth Ian had studied every available printed crystal, every snippet of data the *Stellaris* had carried home, had indeed set to work before Igor filed a special request for him to be sent to Sigma Draconis. A man with such an unusual mind, capable of generating patterns where most people would see a jumble of unconnected nonsense—yes, it was entirely possible he had made the breakthrough.

Hurry up, Lucas! For pity's sake get a move on!

He only thought that, though. He was afraid to say it for fear of disturbing the process of induc-

tion.

"Okay," Lucas said at last, and wiped a trace of sweat from his forehead with his sleeve. "He's in deep trance again now. Funny, it took longer than it usually does, and that's a bad sign."

"Why?"

"Oh. . ." A vague gesture. "It could imply that what he consciously wants to remember actually proved to be very painful and is being suppressed. Or it could mean, equally, that on the subconscious level he's aware that what he mistook for a brilliant inspiration was nothing of the kind, but a delusion caused by the high fever he was suffering. Ever have a dream in which you were sure you'd hit on a marvelous new idea, and then realised on waking that it was completely ridiculous?"

Rorschach nodded soberly. "I get you. But don't make too many dismal forecasts, please. You could be wrong."

"Sure. Shall we find out?"

"Yes, go ahead!"

Lucas turned back to Ian.

"Ian, can you hear me?"

"I hear you fine." Faintly, his voice seeming to come from a long way off. His lips barely moved.

"Ian, think back now, think back to the time just before we came to bring you away from Ash. Are you thinking back? Remember it was the time when you were being a Draconian, you'd lived in the native city for a month, you were in a body with

four legs and you felt the changing fields all around you. . . Are you remembering, Ian?"

"Yes, I'm remembering."

"Tell us all about what it felt like to be there, to be in a body with four legs and pick things up with your long hard lips and sense all the pressures and textures of the walls and the land and the currents of the air." Lucas's tone never wavered; he maintained the same soothing pitch and almost inflectionless delivery as he had used when performing the induction.

"It was. . . different."

"How was it different?"

Rorschach stifled a sigh and composed himself more comfortably on his chair. This was going to take a long time.

LITTLE BY LITTLE they teased out of Ian's memory tantalising hints, and a microphone dutifully recorded every word for later computer-study. They heard how he laboriously worked his way from superficial questions—did they trade? Yes, or they would not have been able to feed themselves in the middle of a city; at least they must have used a division of labour—to others, infinitely more subtle, that would barely adapt to human language.

At one point Rorschach could restrain himself no longer. He muttered, "But this is incredible! He really does seem to have got under the natives' skin!"

Pale, Lucas said, "I'm more

convinced by the moment. But it would be best if you kept completely quiet."

So onward, through the superficial layers of sexuality, and then deeper, and deeper, approaching the central event of a Draconian's existence: the neuter phase marking a watershed between male and female, active and passive.

Now Ian's voice grew hoarse; he took more and more time over each successive answer, hunting for words, repeating himself and then declaring that was wrong and trying again and once continuing for five or six minutes with a series of wild surrealist images, while his face twisted into a mask of agony and tears leaked from his closed lids.

"What's hurting him so?"

Rorschach whispered when Lucas had instructed Ian to relax for a bit following that long slow exhausting utterance.

"It's too early to be sure," Lucas answered equally softly. "My guess is that we've tapped into a personal problem—not related to the Draconians, but to Ian himself—which could have given him the clue he was after, or alternatively might have coloured a hallucination and lent it the spurious air of rationality."

"What sort of personal problem?"

"Sexual? Social? Your guess is as good as mine. You know he was orphaned when he was eight, of course. Perhaps being alone in the Ash site, aware no matter how

he tried to ignore the knowledge that the city was doomed, or perhaps because his rather peculiar cast of mind has made him a solitary person and he resents this handicap—whatever the cause, it's clear he's attained an incredible degree of identification with our hypothetical version of the natives. He looks a little better now. I'll push on."

But not long after he resumed the interrogation, he had to break off again because Ian was clenching his fists and declaring flatly that he was going to die and it was all for nothing and he'd been stupid and wasn't fit to survive anyhow and. . .

Lucas soothed him back into deep trance and ordered him to rest until he wanted to wake up naturally. Then he gave Rorschach a despondent glance.

"Well?"

"That last bit," Rorschach said glumly. "It didn't sound very promising, did it?"

"No. Of course it's premature to say so, but I felt my hopes completely dashed by it. It was as though what he imagined to be an insight into the fate of the Draconians was no more than a renewed realisation, in the context of this ingenious artificial personality, that the species was indeed doomed to extinction."

Lucas stretched; he was stiff from long sitting on his stool face to face with Ian.

"Of course I'll keep on trying. I'll put him through at least a

dozen sessions before I give up."

Rorschach rose and wandered to the window. Gazing out, eyes narrowed against the sunlight, he said with his back turned to Lucas, "Tell me, have you felt that things have been going wrong since we brought Ian back?"

"Very much so," Lucas said.

"How does it look to you?"

"It's hard to pin down, but. . . Oh, mostly there's a sense of fatigue. When we started out, we were always buoyant because every day saw some new discovery, and some new idea always boiled up at the monthly conferences, which enabled people to go away and put yet another theory to the test. That's changed, inevitably. We were on the brink of despondency when Cathy and Igor located the four temples—or whatever they are—and that gave us a fresh lease of life. But even that really spectacular discovery hasn't furnished us with all the stimulus we need. We're back to the regular grind, comparing scraps of data one by one, and now we have so much more information, so many more possible combinations, it's making us dreadfully tired."

Rorschach nodded. "Yes, that's part of it, I'm sure. One has noticed how, because Ian has generated several of the most recent new ideas, people are starting to pin their hopes on him. Without his connivance, of course. And when he actually set

out on his venture at Ash, there was this slight but definite slackening in other people's efforts, as though they honestly expected him to come back with the complete solution. . . There's one other crucial factor operating, though."

Lucas hesitated. He said eventually, "The fact that we're past the halfway mark of the current tour."

Rorschach exhaled gustily. "Thank goodness I'm not the only person who's noticed. I haven't dared mention it before in case it was illusory. After all, on previous tours we haven't had any sense of—of watershed, if you follow me."

Lucas sat down on a nearby bench, his legs dangling.

"True, true. But never before has the ship brought someone empowered to close the base and abolish the Starflight Fund."

"But we sorted that out!" Rorschach said sharply. "Thanks to Ian—" He broke off, his mouth rounding into an O.

"That's why everyone is developing this absurd reliance on Ian," Lucas said with a nod. "Not just his ideas, useful and original though they are. People are aware, even without realising, that quite unintentionally Ian made the difference between continuance of the base and evacuation to Earth. This sense of dependence is bound to grow worse as time goes by."

Rorschach was silent a long

moment. Finally he said, "And if the ship doesn't come back. . .?"

"I don't know." Lucas bit his lip. "But you may wager that you and I are not the only people wondering about that. I—uh—happened to be checking out some computer files the other day, and I noticed you'd been reviewing and updating the long-term survival programmes."

Rorschach said defensively, "It struck me as about time."

"Quite right. They haven't been revised since the end of the first tour, have they? I mean, bar the automatic inclusion of data concerning new arrivals. And I must say that even with your recent additions they don't look promising."

"No, they don't." Rorschach scowled. "In the first instance, all they were designed to do was keep us alive if the ship had an accident and its return was delayed for some fairly long period, a couple of extra years. Turning them into a blueprint for the permanent colonisation of this planet by human beings is a hell of a tough job. For one thing our gene-pool, filtered through the available fertile women, is—" He broke off, obviously annoyed with himself.

Lucas rose and came to put his arm companionably around the older man's shoulders.

"Someone's got to face it sooner or later, Valentine. Someone has to take the cold-blooded calculations the machines make on our

behalf and use them to help us face the idea that the ship may never come back. As Director, I'm afraid it's up to you. I sympathise. Count on me for any help I can offer."

Behind them Ian stirred. They turned in time to see him rise, licking his lips.

"Did you. . .?" he asked, and his voice failed him, while eager expectation lighted his eyes.

"Sorry," Lucas said. "Not yet. But we'll try again tomorrow."

"What's the problem? I *know* I had it all clear in my mind!"

"Yes, but. . ." Lucas sought for words. "Maybe it made sense in Draconian terms. What we have to do is find a way of translating them into human language, isn't it?" He smiled reassurance. "We'll try again tomorrow, shall we?"

"I guess so," Ian said dully. "Okay. If anybody wants me I'll be in the refectory. I need a drink."

XVIII

IAN SAT MISERABLE at his bench in the relic-shed, staring at the screen of the computer remote. On it stark letters and symbols reported the result of his latest search through the known patterns imprinted on the Draconian crystals.

They *were* fundamentally identical. Checking and double-checking (designed to eliminate

random noise due to the weight of overlay activating the piezo effect in them) which were supposed to make the differences clearer, had done the opposite. It had shown that what differences might once have existed between one crystal and its neighbour had been so slight the mere passage of time had blurred them past recovery.

"It's insane!" he said to the air. "Thousands and thousands and thousands of them, and all alike as peas! *Why?* We make identical objects, but for use—tools, coins, garments, practical things that are needed by vast numbers of people. An archeologist digging the ruins of Earth would find them scattered almost from pole to pole, not stacked up exclusively in huge central warehouses. And I was so close to understanding what they're for, so damnably close!"

He broke off, guiltily aware that it was unhealthy to address himself aloud in this fashion, but tempted to do so in another way. He resisted the temptation for a few seconds, then yielded with a sigh, and pressed a switch which wiped the screen and instead activated a speaker linked to the computers.

Once again—for the tenth, twelfth time?—he heard the recording made of his last session under hypnosis with Lucas, the one which had reduced him to such a state of hysteria that Rorschach had forbidden him to try again.

Gabbling pure nonsense, even to his own ears, he heard his voice made harsh by anger and sour by grief. What the hell could he possibly have meant by a phrase like "we all shrank until we didn't have room for ourselves"—or, weirder still, "we got fined and that was the end of us!"?

Behind him there was a light footfall. He slapped the switch and the recording stopped instantly, but it was too late. The newcomer was Cathy, and she was predictably annoyed.

"Ian, when are you going to stop this foolishness?" she demanded. "You've listened to that until you must know it by heart, but every time I come in I seem to find you at it again!"

Without looking at her, he retorted, "You don't believe me any more than the rest of them, do you? You don't believe I really understood, just for a fraction of a second, what exterminated the Draconians!"

"Of course," Cathy said. "I've said I take your word for it, haven't I? But until you—"

Now he swung around on his chair to face her, eyes blazing.

"I'm getting sick of the way people are treating me!" he exploded.

Seeming frightened, she stepped back half a pace. "What do you mean?" she countered.

"You know damn' well—or at any rate you should! It's plain enough, isn't it?" He jumped to

his feet and began to stride up and down, pounding fist into palm to emphasise his words.

"Everybody's acting as though I've—I've betrayed them! Just because Lucas isn't smart enough to take me back under hypnosis to the stage I reached when he was idiotic enough to drag me away from Ash! Is it my fault that I was interrupted just at the crucial moment? Is it my fault that Rorschach refuses to give me back the simulacrum, so I can have another go? Well, is it?"

He glared at her.

Timidly she said, "Ian, you're letting this prey on your mind. I'm sure nobody thinks you've let us down."

"That's what you think, is it? Well, you damn' well ought to open your eyes and ears! Stop humouring me! Stop making soothing noises to calm me down! Get a grip on what's actually happening for a change!"

She looked at him levelly, her face pale.

"Ian, why is it that every time I try and discuss this with you rationally you break out into a hysterical rage?"

"I do not!"

"Listen to yourself, Ian. Do it on tape, if you have to, but listen. You're disappointed, naturally, but instead of working to put things right you're making them worse. You ought to be consulting people instead of insulting them!"

He closed the gap between them with a single long stride and

slapped her cheek with a sound like a gunshot.

Instantly he could have cut off his hand. He stood frozen, watching the paleness of her skin give way to red where he had struck her. She made as though to touch her cheek in disbelief, but canceled the impulse and lowered her arm again.

Her tone measured, she said, "You're not being the Ian I fell in love with. When you get back to where you were, let me know. But for the time being I don't want any more to do with you."

She spun on her heel and stalked away. The door slammed. When he ran after her, shouting, she ignored him, and when he returned to the room they had been sharing he found everything that belonged to her had been removed.

"IAN?"

A soft voice pierced the midnight darkness. He was sitting alone on a rock, half a mile from the base, at the edge of the glass disc into which the first arrivals had sterilised the sand. He didn't look around; he was staring, unseeing, at the heedless stars.

It was cold. Here as on Earth it was cold at night in a desert. But he didn't pay attention to that, either.

The voice belonged to Igor. Shortly, his dark lean figure appeared from the direction of the base, his feet making little crunching noises.

"I won't ask if you mind my joining you," he said. "But I propose to do so anyhow."

There was another rock nearby, of a convenient height for sitting on. He moved towards it. Sat. Did something Ian could not make out. Then, abruptly, a flame loomed hurtfully bright, there were sucking sounds, and a waft of smoke reached Ian's nostrils.

He said involuntarily, "A pipe?"

Igor chuckled. "Ah, you haven't lost your tongue. . . Yes, a pipe. I brought it from Earth more as a souvenir than for use. I suppose this is—oh—the fourth time I've lit it since I arrived."

The red glow of the pipe-bowl was just enough to show his sharp features when he drew on it.

"Hmml!" he commented after a pause. "Synthetic it may be, but it's convincingly like tobacco. Perhaps a bit harsh—like you."

"I guess you've been talking to Cathy," Ian said bitterly.

"No, right now Cathy isn't talking to anybody," Igor murmured. "And so far as I'm concerned what's happened between you is none of my business. I'm sorry about it, but that doesn't give me the right to interfere. Not unless you, as a friend, invite me to mediate. . . which I'd cheerfully do, of course. I was very pleased when you and she got together."

Ian didn't answer. Having drawn twice more on his pipe and tamped the mock-tobacco with a handy pebble, Igor resumed, "Still, that's not why I came out

looking for you. I suddenly wanted to ask you why you became involved in archeology."

"What?"

"Does it sound like a silly question? I guess it may. . . But I've been thinking a lot about my own motives recently. You know, we've got to face the fact, sooner or later, that the *Stellaris* may have made her last voyage. Something may all too easily have gone wrong on Earth which has destroyed the—what's the term?—the infrastructure she depends on. Thinking about the all-too-real possibility that I may die here and never see my home again, I started wondering what led me to another planet."

He puffed reflectively.

"I very nearly became a mineralogist, you know, rather than an archeologist. I'd almost completed my training, when my wife and my baby daughter were killed in an accident, and the shock drove me into a nervous breakdown. It took me three years to get over it."

"I didn't know!" Ian exclaimed, startled out of his apathy.

Igor sighed. "Yes, I did ask them not to include that in the briefing-tapes at Starflight Centre. It was a long time ago—thirty years—and I'm not the same person as I was then. But, as I was going to say: for a long time I believed that this was why I switched to archeology. I suspected myself of wanting to recover the past I'd set such store

by, snatched away from me by blind chance. It wasn't until I'd spent a long time here that I realised the impulse was deeper, and more subtle."

The pipe was burning badly; he fumbled on the ground for the handy stone and re-tamped the bowl.

"What was it?" Ian said slowly.

"The fact that I'm a Pole," Igor answered. "Citizen of a country which for centuries didn't exist. Yet it was, in the end, re-created, and continues to this day. I believe now that my subconscious argument went like this: for my ancestors, proud of their heritage, there was a time when they were afraid their homeland had disappeared forever. Nonetheless they refused to accept that idea, and worked until it was proved false. In my personal case, I imagined I had no reason to go on living; in fact I did once try to kill myself. Then I realised that that was absurd. I could make a new and very good life, and devote it to—what can I call it?—the creation of a link between the past and the future, that bond which so often seems to have been severed and in fact cannot be no matter how much strain is put on it."

"I think I understand that," Ian said after pondering for a while.

"Yes, of course."

"I've been to the Scottish islands, the Hebrides. As a matter of fact, I went there deliberately just before I reported to join

Stellaris. Have you ever been there?"

Ian was jolted. He said in sheer amazement, "Yes, and—and for the same reason!"

"The idea was planted in your mind. I arranged for it to be planted."

"What?"

"I'd never met you, but I was sure that somebody who had such strong involvement with the past would be deeply affected by seeing those abandoned settlements, the crofts open to the wind, the land that once was ploughed and sown returned to the weeds and the wild grasses. . . ." Igor gestured with his pipe. "I went there because I wanted to feel what it was like to walk among ruins left by people who cared little or nothing for written records, who lived their lives and vanished into the anonymous dark. I had my choice of a score of islands where the same thing has happened, but I decided I should choose a place which the classical historians described as lying on the dark and misty edge of the world, where sky and sea blend into a confusion neither one thing nor the other. I thought it might have the same impact on you, only maybe stronger, you being of Scottish descent. Do you feel you've been manipulated?"

Ian hesitated. Suddenly he gave a harsh laugh. "In a way. But it's nothing I can resent. It makes me—well, it makes me admire

you more than I already did."

"The admiration is mutual," Igor said. "And it's not at all affected by what you persist in regarding as your recent failure. It was a colossal—a fantastic—success. I couldn't have done it. Nobody else here could have done it."

"It wasn't a success!" Ian burst out. "It could have been, only—"

"Only someone was stupid enough to save your life." Igor inserted the words with the precision of a surgeon's knife. "You short-sighted fool. What good would it have done the rest of us if you'd discovered the secret and nursed it into your grave—hm?"

"I. . ." Ian bit his lip, and eventually nodded.

"Good. Now we're getting somewhere. I know exactly the predicament you're in; it's happened to me time and again, not in connection with inscriptions because that's not my speciality, but in connection with artefacts. What's this corroded lump here, then? I think it's a—a—. . . ! Just a moment! And then the moment stretches into weeks, months, sometimes years, and one day when I've almost forgotten about it: click! Of course! That ridiculous Y-shaped bit of metal can only have been a cramp for plough-handles made from unplanned tree-branches! That's a real example, by the way. Another that I was nearly as proud of was one time when I realised that a fascinating artefact dug up at a site

in Crete actually must have been left behind by a Victorian archaeological expedition."

"You're joking!"

"Not at all. But I'd never have caught on if I hadn't recognised a drawing of it in a magazine advertisement from 1898." Igor chuckled, drew one final time on his pipe, and tapped out the dottle against the rock he was sitting on.

"What I'm counselling you, Ian, is simply patience. I'd never have mentioned that I planted the suggestion of your trip to the Hebrides, but that I wanted to impress you with my—shall I call it my right? Yes, that's accurate—my *right*, then, to give you advice. I say that what you should do is go back to your quarters and get some sleep, and in the morning make it up with Cathy, because you two working together are more than the sum of your parts, and stop imagining that you're infallible simply because you're a hell of a sight smarter than six of the rest of us rolled into one."

"I never—"

"Yes you did. Stop it."

Ian licked his lips. "Is that really the impression I give people?"

"Only when you're very angry with yourself. And you've no call for that, on your showing up to now. Come on, let's walk back together."

Igor took the younger man companionably by the arm and led him away.

TALKING TO IGOR was like having mist cleared from his mind by a sea-fresh breeze. The more he thought over what the older man had said, the more Ian realised he was absolutely right.

Okay, so I came up with a handful of bright new ideas on my very first tour! But so did almost everybody else! And no doubt all the others also vainly hoped they'd be the first to solve the mystery. . . .

He sought out Cathy and surprised himself by being able to apologise in a few short, sincere words; all too often, when it came to expressing his deepest feelings, he waffled and mumbled and went all around Robin Hood's barn. Her answer was typically direct.

"Good. I'm glad. See you to-night."

AS THOUGH his mental mist had been veiling things he ought to have spotted long ago, he suddenly found he was able to review with detachment a whole range of possibilities that might lead him back on a conscious, human level to the forgotten insight he'd experienced at Ash. He sat down and worked out a careful list of subjects, and then systematically set about interrogating his colleagues on each in turn.

NADINE SHAH was busy in the bio-lab conducting a series of

comparison-tests on genetic material recovered from the most recent of the Draconian corpses embalmed by anaerobic water at the peat-site, checking the gene-equivalents one by one against a range of cells from contemporary fauna. But most of the job was being done by the computers, so she was quite happy to spend a while chatting with Ian.

"I've been thinking back over the summary of our ideas about the Draconians which Igor gave to Ordoñez-Vico," he began. "I didn't think about it at the time since palaeo-biology of course is not my speciality, but now I'm struck by one astonishing omission."

"That being. . .?"

"He made no mention of natural population-control processes as a possible explanation for the natives' extinction."

Nadine gave a wry smile. "I'm afraid that's not astonishing at all," she said. "I don't imagine you dug that far back into the computer-stores, but of course a population collapse was among the first ideas that were exhaustively evaluated by the original party here. In fact I spent the first couple of months after I arrived double-checking some work that Ruby Ngola had done on population-control forces." She was referring to one of the people who had been rotated home last time the *Stellaris* called. "Attractive and logical though the suggestion was, we had to rule it

out—categorically and once for all. And everything we've learned since confirms that we were right to do so. If you want the full details, I can put them up on a screen for you, but I suspect some of the equations we use may be a little hard for a non-specialist to follow."

"Give it to me in words, then," Ian invited.

"Oh, essentially it's very simple. Short of significant climatic changes, or the appearance of some brand-new mutation, populations here are a hell of a lot more stable than their counterparts on Earth. There's an incredibly close match, for example, between the number of young born in a good year and in a bad year. When more fodder is available, more active males are competing for the sessile females, but by the same token they're also better able to drive one another away. When there's little food to be had, the males become less active and just about the same number of females get fertilised. Where an Earthly population may fluctuate by several hundred per cent, a boom followed by a crash, herd-size here generally remains within a range of plus or minus six to eight per cent. Granted, it's obvious that the Draconians interfered with the natural order, but it's been proved that they expanded steadily, moving constantly into new territory, at a rate that corresponds very well with the maximum speed of popu-

lation increase in contemporary species. So, unless it was the shock of meeting themselves coming back, as it were. . .” She grinned broadly.

But Ian was frowning. “Yes, I see. They didn’t even occupy all the regions of their planet which would have been comfortable for them, did they?”

“That’s right, they didn’t. So unless some areas were out of bounds to them because of something we don’t know about—endemic disease, perhaps—they would still have had enough food and enough territory to at least double their numbers without feeling the pinch. By the way, when I said we dismissed the idea completely, I don’t mean we’ve ignored it; we have a monitor programme constantly sifting new data to see if there’s any reason for changing our minds. But it’s been—oh—five years since that programme called for attention, and then it was a false alarm.”

“Thanks very much,” Ian said, and rose to go.

THE NEXT PERSON he inquired of was Ruggiero Bono, as being their leading authority on the natives’ palaeotechnology. He cornered the little dark man in the refectory after the evening meal, and asked whether, if the natives used bioelectronic devices, they could ever have developed a self-perpetuating strain of something that broadcast so loud a signal it interfered with their sensory per-

ceptions and maybe even with their thinking.

“Hmml!” Ruggiero rubbed his chin. “You mean some kind of weed that would—well—deafen them?”

“That’s more or less the idea.”

“Just a second. . .” Ruggiero produced his pocket calculator and ran his fingers over it, frowning. Eventually he shook his head.

“Sorry, no. It’s a clever notion, but quite impossible. There simply couldn’t be that much energy in a vegetable metabolism. The poor plant would curl up and frizzle at the edges. And in any case, if that were the explanation, tell me please why they were all affected by it, including the ones far enough away from the spot where the problem arose to have time to take steps and put it right!”

“Good point,” Ian muttered ruefully. “Well, then, have you come across any relics, any artefacts, which might indicate that they were changing over from organic to inorganic devices? I imagine a human-built radio, or indeed a good few of our own gadgets, would have driven a Draconian instantly insane.”

“Oh, that’s perfectly true,” Ruggiero conceded. “An output of twenty watts would have hurt them terribly—but I don’t have to tell you that, after your experience in the simulacrum. But the answer’s no, again. Sorry to disappoint you. So far as we can tell,

their crowning achievement was to visit the moon and build their 'scope up there. If they were still using bioelectronics for that, then they almost certainly were not changing over to inorganics."

"Just a second," Ian said. "Would those bioelectronics have been capable of emitting signals powerful enough to be heard down here?"

"I see what you're driving at," Ruggiero muttered, his eyes fixed on nowhere. "That would argue a very powerful signal indeed, which brings us back to your first question, doesn't it? But... Well, if you like I'll check out what the computers have to say on the subject, but I'm inclined to suspect first of all that you could do things in vacuum which you couldn't do here in a humid atmosphere, and second that they probably went up and down to collect the data. Consider: that flying-machine, that one sunken ship! To me it seems more consonant with their ordinary behaviour to assume that they had one and only one moonship—just as we have one starship!—and shuttled back and forth, making their mistakes if any on the very first trip and thereafter treating it as a matter of routine. You know we haven't dug up anything resembling a spaceport."

He hesitated. "Funny! I never looked at it quite that way before: they had one moonship, most likely, and we haven't found it; we have one starship. And that

may not come back either."

"I suspect you're about to become dismal," Ian said. "Have another glass of wine."

THE NEXT person he tackled was Abdul Hossein. The lean, beak-nosed Arab gravely considered the question of whether, in the light of information-theory, it might be possible for an interaction between members of the Draconian species that was in fact insane to be so total that no single member of the race escaped.

He thought for a moment, and then said, "Ian; I'll give you this: You never stop trying, do you? I'm not sure I can answer with authority, but at least it's a brand-new suggestion and we're running terribly short of those."

He swung around in his chair and punched the keyboard of the nearest computer read-in.

For a while there was no sound bar the faint electrical hum of the machines in the computer-hall.

Then, studying a series of figures as they appeared on the screen above the read-in, he said, "A shame. There literally isn't one chance in a million of a contagious psychosis being spread by that mode of contact. Not even if the person who went insane had the greatest charisma in all space and all time. We know the effective limit of the electrical senses of contemporary species—that's what I punched for first—and we know the probable attenuation factor of a real-time signal, and we know a

good few other relevant items. What emerges is something like an epidemic pattern; given that the disease is capable of infecting the species, it must *a priori* be similar enough to previous diseases for certain individuals to possess antibodies endowing them with at least partial resistance. There will always be some survivors and the odds are all in favour of there being a number of total-immunes. Same goes for this notion of a contagious form of insanity. By the time it had been filtered through a few dozen contacts, it would be attenuated. Overprinted, as it were, with more normal mental attitudes. It could destroy a small community, but not the entire race."

He leaned back. "What's more, the sort of ultra-violent psychosis you're talking about would probably have made the victim non-viable. He'd have—oh!—forgotten to eat!"

Ian said thoughtfully, "I'd more or less worked that out myself, given that we believe the Dracnians communicated by externalising patterns that corresponded to internal bodily states. I'd hazard a guess that they probably never treated mental illness—merely ostracised the sufferer—and that was why I came and asked you about contagion. Like you say, though, the odds are all in favour of someone that deranged being incapable of functioning like a proper person. It would more likely kill a few individuals than

all of them. Oh, well. . .!"

Abdul gave an airy wave. "Sorry to disappoint you! But if you come up with any more fresh approaches, let me know. Things are becoming terribly dull around here, aren't they? You seem to be the only person still firing on all cylinders."

WHEN CATHY next returned from her twenty-day spell of duty at the peat-site, after the enjoyable reunion of their love-making, they lay side by side for a long while, not speaking.

"You're very quiet," Cathy said at last.

"So are you."

"Yes. . . But nothing very much has happened at the site, you know. We just keep shifting cover and inspecting what we find underneath, and there isn't anything as startling as the temples for us to report on this time."

"You haven't figured out any new explanations for those damn things, have you?"

"None at all. Four mysteries wrapped inside four puzzles and four enigmas! You?"

"I do seem to be producing ideas again," Ian said wryly. "In fact Abdul said I'm the only person who is around here. I've just been tackling people, one by one, as I work down a list of possibilities, some ridiculous, some promising, not one fruitful. . . But I haven't reached the end of the list yet. There's still hope."

Once more there was a period

of silence. Suddenly Cathy said, "Speaking of hope, Ian: do you think there's any hope that the *Stellaris* will come back?"

He was so startled, he rose on one elbow to stare at her even though the room was in darkness.

"Why in hell do you ask that?" he demanded.

"Because. . ." She hesitated. "Because if she doesn't, it will be the women who have to worry most, won't it?"

"Oh!" Ian sounded dismayed. "Yes, I see what you mean!"

"If the ship doesn't arrive," Cathy went on doggedly, "we shall presumably have to choose between suicide and trying to set up a permanent colony. I'm not the suicidal type, but on the other hand I'm not the maternal type either. Sometimes, out at the dig, I've lain awake for hours, wondering whether I can face the job of bearing and raising children so that mankind can survive here when—for all we can tell—it hasn't survived on its native planet."

Chidingly he said, "But you're talking as though the ship has already failed to come back!"

"Time's wasting," Cathy muttered. "We'll know soon—in a matter of a few more months. Wouldn't it be terrible if we did fathom the mystery of the Dracnians and then sat here, waiting, for ever and a day because on Earth they'd lost interest or smashed things up so badly they couldn't afford to send the ship

here again?"

"It won't happen," Ian said, trying to sound confident. "Out of the question! Even if there were—oh—a war, or something, the mere fact that people have been sent here would be enough to make them want to re-establish contact."

"Garbage."

"What?"

"I said garbage! I'm talking about the kind of war which would make it literally impossible to contact us again."

"Well. . ." He lay down anew. "Well, yes. There is that."

"Of course there is. And nothing we do can make any difference. I guess we'd better try and go to sleep. But if I wake up screaming, you'll know what I've been dreaming about."

xx

ITEM BY ITEM Ian ticked off his list, but it seemed to remain the same length as it was originally; every time he had to consign an idea to oblivion, another struck him. It would be a miracle if that process continued for more than a few more weeks—still, while it lasted, it was comforting.

HE WENT TO CALL on Karen at the civil engineering headquarters, where she was supervising the manufacture of a new batch of girders to be shipped to Peat and riveted together in order to hold

back a wall of soft crumbly vegetable matter that threatened to slump down and bury the digging-machines.

"Well, hello stranger!" Karen said in a friendly mocking tone as he entered her office, three-parts walled with tinted glass that allowed her to watch the foundry processes directly as well as monitoring them by way of the electronic systems. "I thought we weren't pals any more!"

"Lord, has it become that bad?" Ian said in near-dismay. . . but a second later he caught on, and was grinning as he sat down in a vacant chair beside her, without waiting for an invitation. "Can I interrupt?"

"Talk all you like. This is going very smoothly."

"Well, what it boils down to is this. It just occurred to me that while almost everybody else keeps offering theories about the fate of the Draconians, you don't. And you're here, and you have a speciality that's very important to us, and—well, do you have any new suggestions?"

"That's a brute of a question!" She spun around in her chair and looked keenly at him. "The main reason nobody asked me before, I dare say, is because it's out of my field. I make things. I'm practical, not theoretical."

"Then make me a practical suggestion, why not?"

Karen chuckled. "Okay! After all, I've been here as long as you, and I must have thought of some-

thing by now, even if other people already decided it wasn't worth consideration. . . I take it you've been through the biological and psychological bit, and you want me to see if I can think of a material, inorganic idea?"

"I'd welcome one. I'm not well grounded in that area."

"Me, yes—but as to how a mineral salt or something contaminating water could have affected a Draconian. . . Well, I did once think of a point I don't believe has been discussed at a monthly conference, though I'm sure it must have been investigated by Nadine or Lucas."

"You'd be surprised at what we've overlooked. Even though it turned out not to be important when we did finally evaluate it."

"Okay." Karen shrugged, making her large soft body ripple like a disturbed pond. "Among the things they tell you when you're training to design like a new city in an underdeveloped region is what may well have rendered the Roman upper classes decadent. Not only did they pipe their water by lead conduits—they also liked to ferment their wine in lead-lined vats because that made it sweeter. If you ever looked into primitive chemistry or alchemy you probably ran across the ancient term 'sugar of lead', which is a lead-salt that oddly enough tastes sweet."

"You're saying the Draconians might have let some insidious poison build up in their bodies?"

"Don't ask me, ask a biologist—and right now, excuse me please because I think we've got an overheat in Number Nine solar furnace which is on the way to melting the wrong things!"

NADINE and Lucas were polite, but perceptibly scornful, and dashed his hopes. Naturally, any build-up of poisonous metal—whether light, like beryllium, or heavy, like lead or mercury—would have been revealed when they were running element; checks on the first corpses to be dug up. Neither those nor any more recent specimens had shown signs of poison; the last remaining, very slender, possibility consisted in some organic poison like DDT which time had dissociated into its simpler molecules. . .but that was out of reach forever if it had existed.

Scrub another bright idea.

MEANTIME, he received uniformly doleful reports from the computer in which he had left running a programme to clarify and analyse the patterns in the printed crystals. No matter whether the data came from remotes at the digs, "reading" the crystals as they were found in one "library" after another—at least one per city-site, and at Peat and Ash two—or whether they came from crystals he had brought to the base with care in non-magnetic padded crates, they all converged towards a single con-

clusion.

Damn it, they did make thousands and maybe millions of the things printed with patterns so nearly identical as to be indistinguishable now!

Olaf and Sue had temporarily turned over Ash to the automatics when a library was found, at long last, in the Silt city. Ian borrowed a hovercraft and went out to look it over. Small wonder, though, that it hadn't been spotted before; so much weight had overlain the building where the crystals had been stored, the piezo effect had randomised the information beyond recall. Besides, when the site was underwater—probably for about fifteen thousand years—electrical fields due to sea-creatures had also taken their toll.

It was raining when Ian first clapped eyes on that particular library: rack after stack of crystals were being laid bare to the downpour by the automatics. At random he said to his companions, "Hey, can you think of any reason to make so many identical entries in an information-store?"

They both glanced at him in surprise. He went on rather sheepishly, "See, I came here to try and read what's—what's written in these things. I didn't really have much hope of success, but I didn't expect, either, that I couldn't come up with any explanation for their existence!"

"You said something at the last monthly conference," Sue recalled with a frown, "about the differ-

ences between them being so slight. . .”

Olaf snapped his fingers. “I know where you find lots of virtually identical records!”

“What?” Ian looked as though he wanted to embrace Olaf. “Tell me, quick!”

“Well, in a government office, right? I mean, like a tax-collector’s or a birth-and-death registrar’s. . .” Olaf’s eyes grew round in wonder at his own perceptivity. “Say, I believe I just hit on something, didn’t I?”

“You certainly did,” Ian said with feeling. “And I’ve just realised there’s somebody I haven’t pestered with my questions when I ought to have done.”

The others looked a question at him.

“Valentine Rorschach, dammit!” Ian exploded. “We’ve been deep, deep into the bodily functions and the nervous system and the sexual habits and whatever of the natives, and we’ve neglected the holistic aspect of their society. We’ve never asked whether they had a government, and if so, how it could have operated.”

“I’ll be damned,” Sue said in pure wonderment. “You go beard Valentine and see what he can bring up for us at the next conference, hear?”

RORSCHACH looked faintly surprised when—after false starts due to excitement—Ian managed to put his point over.

“It honestly never occurred to

me before,” he said, “but you’re right. They picked me to come here because they thought I’d be a competent Director, not because I’m outstanding in any single scientific field like Igor or Lucas. But it’s true that every skill on the planet is precious, and I probably ought to have applied mine to the study of the natives as well. . . On the other hand: how could any—what would you call it?—any administrative problem lead to the extinction of a species?”

“I don’t know,” Ian admitted at once. “But I can tell you this. No other suggestion put to me has come closer to touching me on the spot where I felt the—the raw hurt of impending doom when I was exploring Ash in the simulated Draconian.”

Rorschach pursed his lips. “I don’t know whether to say that’s interesting, or that’s reassuring, or that’s indicative. . . Could you leave it with me for a day or two? I’ll review every item I can find that might have a bearing on hypothetical social organisation among the natives, and see if anything significant comes out.”

“That’ll be fine,” Ian said, and rose to leave. Rorschach checked him.

“Since you’re here, Ian, I ought to take advantage of the opportunity. . . I’m not sure how best to put this, but I imagine you, like most of us, have been wondering what will happen if *Stellaris* fails to turn up on

schedule?"

Ian lowered himself slowly back into his chair. He said after a miniature eternity, "Yes. Cathy and I talked about that already."

"Good; I can save the preamble for somebody else. I was expecting that." Rorschach licked his lips. "I know it's very cold-blooded, but we are compelled to think—if worse comes to worst—in terms of genetic pools and optimal unions and rhesus-negative and—"

"What you're driving at," Ian broke in, "is that we shall have to work out a plan to establish ourselves permanently."

"The plans don't have to be worked out. They've existed since the base was set up. The chance of our being stranded has always been in the realm of possibility; now, though, it's attained probability in many people's minds. Have you noticed?"

Ian hesitated. Memories of casual, bitter remarks—like Ruggiero's of a few weeks ago—came back to him. He nodded.

"I think it's time I started making it clear to people that the failure of the *Stellaris* to arrive needn't mean the end of the universe," Rorschach said in a brittle, rehearsed-sounding voice. "We have an excellent spectrum of genetic endowment, and your heredity is among the finest on the planet. So is Cathy's. We'd appreciate it if—"

Ian was ahead of him. He said sharply. "If, when the crunch

comes, we'd be the first to agree that we ought to start a family and make a bid for survival of the species."

Rorschach inclined his head.

"Precisely. But a little more than that. The first to agree that you'll share out your genes—spread them as far as possible among the next generation."

Ian looked at him for a long while. Eventually he said, cheeks very pale above his red beard, "I know why you had to say that, Valentine. I know it makes good sense. I'm sure Olaf and Sue and Karen and Achmed and everybody will be agreeable, and they wouldn't be here any more than myself or Cathy if their heredity weren't admirable. But I could wish that you'd prefaced that blunt remark with the answer to a question I imagine you know is bound to be asked."

Rorschach, face strained, gave a slow nod. "What's life going to be like among a group of thirty very independent, very intelligent people who came here for one special purpose and find that they're marooned with no way of letting Earth know even if that original goal is attained?"

"Exactly. It's not going to be much fun, is it?"

"No." For a fleeting instant the Director looked old, far older than his actual age, as though his mind had been much preyed on by anxiety. "But there it is—and we may be wrong in taking these pessimistic precautions."

"I guess so."

"I hope so," Rorschach countered. "Keep it up on the level of hope as long as possible, hm?"

"Ah, Ian! Valentine tells me you've even cornered him now to kick him into a fresh appraisal of our problems!"

Beaming, Igor approached Ian in the refectory; both had arrived a few minutes early for the start of the monthly conference.

"What? Oh!" Ian gave a wry grin. "Really it was Olaf and Sue who put me on the track of that. And then Valentine promptly hit back with a real problem, something much worse than a mystery."

Igor's face became grave as he lowered himself into the adjacent chair.

"Yes, I know about that. We all do, I think. Even if we aren't discussing it openly. I'm sure you're taking it dispassionately for the time being at least, no matter how tough it may prove to be in the long run. Am I right in suspecting Cathy may be reacting the opposite way around?"

"You know her very well, don't you?"

"No." Igor shook his head. "Since—well, the tragedy I once described to you, I've been chary of over-close acquaintance with women. But I think I sum her up accurately."

Ian nodded, his eyes on Igor's face. He said after a pause, his voice strained, "We've talked

about you a lot. She—I—What I mean is. . . ." But the right phrase eluded him; he broke off.

"She—?" Igor said with deliberate obtuseness.

Ian drew a deep breath. "She said maybe her first child ought to be yours. Just in case, when it comes time for a second, you. . . ."

"In case I'm too old," Igor said in a gravelly voice. And raised his hand to forestall Ian's ready contradiction. "Oh, don't try and deceive me. I could well be. Deprived of our contact with Earth, flimsy though that is, we could easily slip into a decline. What do you want me to say?"

"Nothing. I want to hear it, that's all."

"Then I'm flattered," was Igor's instant response. "More, perhaps, than ever in my life. How curious it is, though, to think of oneself as—as breeding-stock! Isn't it *strange*? To have to shed thousands of years of preconceptions, a lifetime of social conditioning. . . . But I guess it's true that we shall have to make the best of what we've got."

He stared at Ian, whose eyes had suddenly unfocused and whose cheeks had turned paper-pale.

"Ian!" he exclaimed. "Is something the matter?"

"I. . . ." Ian shook his head, as though giddy. "I don't know! But when you said that, I felt—I thought. . . . Oh, *hell*! I don't know! Something came right to the tip of my tongue, and now it's

gone again, and—”

And half a dozen other people came into the room and there were distractions on every side.

XXI

SLOWLY TIME wore away towards the scheduled date of the next visit by *Stellaris*. By stages the work at the various digs was cut back, so that there would be a chance to assess, review and digest what had been discovered during this two-year tour, and decisions could be reached concerning what artefacts should be shipped to Earth. Clearly, one of the most important items ought to be a statue; they settled on the second-least damaged of the group of four, and with utmost care dismounted it from its roof, loaded it on a hovercraft, brought it back to the base.

Encased in a transparent block of plastic, poured cold, to protect its delicate surface finish, it stood outside the puny human buildings, like the ghost of a giant, and seemed to mock without words.

Certainly there had been some spectacular finds since the ship last called. Equally certainly, each of them had made the mystery deeper. It burdened the minds of them all with gloom. To make sure that starflight would continue, to keep up the flagging interest of those at home, they had hoped to produce vast amounts of new positive knowledge. Instead,

what they had learned was chiefly negative: that idea can be dismissed now, so can that, so can that. . .

Depressed and resentful, the staff re-assembled on the day appointed, and then began the time of fearful waiting. It had been bad last trip, Ian was told, when *Stellaris* was twelve whole days overdue; this time it was going to be infinitely worse even though she might be a mere one day late.

Rorschach, with the help of Igor and Lucas, kept trying to revive people's spirits by reminding them that Rudolf Weil had promised to devote all his efforts to ensuring that some kind of contact with Earth would be maintained at all costs. But his assurances rang hollow. The name of Ordoñez-Vico cropped up in conversation again, at first in passing, then as a central subject in an argument.

A myriad wild hypotheses flew from mouth to mouth: suppose there's been an all-out war at long last, suppose some terrorist group managed to sabotage the ship by smuggling a bomb up to her in a batch of supplies, suppose there's been a financial crash, worldwide, and the Starflight Fund has gone into bankruptcy, suppose the UN has collapsed owing to friction between competing nationalistic interests. . .!

Five days late; seven; ten—and the subject of conversation had altered again, this time to consideration of the ways in which they

might survive here. Nobody wanted that. Nobody wanted to settle permanently on Sigma Draconis III, because they hadn't come here as colonists, but as investigators. Frequently people invoked Ian's experience when he was deciphering the Zimbabwe script: it was all very well for him to demonstrate that a modern man could still live the way an ancient tribe had lived, but would he have wanted to be condemned to that for the rest of his life—drinking foul water, eating what he could gather or kill with a snare or a spear, forever at the mercy of wild animals and strange disease?

There was an unprecedented run on the beer and wine programmes as the refectory.

THEN, supported by hangovers, tempers began to flare; for the first time since the base was founded a fist-fight broke out on the thirteenth day of waiting for the ship. Achmed, doing his best to keep his self-control despite the fact that he—as their communications chief—was the focus of all their vague, diffuse resentment, as though it was his fault the ship's signal had not appeared, had broached to Nadine Shah the possibility that they might have children together, as being the only two people here of Muslim extraction.

Ordinarily, matters of religious belief were left to one side among the base staff; the majority,

perhaps twenty, of them had no faith, but of course when it came to raising children, with all the attendant questions of passing on a cultural tradition, subconscious reflexes entered into play, old habit-patterns not thought about for years.

And when Achmed learned that Ruggiero, a Catholic, had made the same suggestion to Nadine—explosion. He broke Ruggiero's nose, and lost a tooth.

AS THOUGH FRIGHTENED that they too might explode, people took to avoiding one another's company. Whereas last time, while waiting for the ship, most people had spent most of each day in the computer hall, chatting and hoping, now they drifted apart into small groups. If so many as six or seven people found themselves in the computer hall together, only a few minutes would pass before a couple of them would find a reason for moving elsewhere.

Even when it was meal-time, the refectory was never more than half-full; some people came early, others, on seeing that ten or fifteen were already present, would decide to wait an extra half-hour. In the evenings they dispersed to their quarters instead of staying together to talk, listen to music or play videotapes.

One could sense that, if a colony were compulsorily set up on this planet, it would be fragmented before it came into exis-

tence.

The prospect was nothing short of terrifying.

SOME FEW PEOPLE, including Ian and Cathy, were not content to mooch around, but did their dogged best to concentrate on their work. The cataloguing of artefacts could be double-checked; the seemingly identical patterns printed in the Draconian crystals could be sifted again and yet again, in the hope that in some few of them might have survived the faint, faint resonances that must—*a priori* must!—once have distinguished each from its neighbours. After the fifteenth day Rorschach started encouraging others to do the same; after the twentieth, he was blunt about it, making it a near-order. . . though carefully calculated not to appear an outright command.

It helped a little. For some people, though, there was nothing to do: Karen's civil engineers, in particular, had already checked and re-checked all their equipment, and Achmed and his computer-and-communications group were also in a boring frustrating rut, obliged to keep watch for the ship by turns, and always being disappointed.

How long must they postpone the decision to face facts? How long before they set about a rational reorganisation on settlement lines, gave up their vain hope of hearing from Earth again?

Ian put the question late one

night to Cathy, and she shivered a little as she tried to answer.

"Ian, we're in a terrible double-bind! All of us know that after waiting this long we may have to wait indefinitely—but when it comes to working out the pattern for a permanent colony, there are such hideous problems to be solved that we simply don't want to discuss them. There are physical problems, aren't they? Making the most of our gene-pool, that's the worst because it means scrapping so many of our hopes, ambitions, preferences. . ."

"Igor said how strange it is to have to think of oneself as breeding-stock," Ian muttered.

"That's it exactly," Cathy said. "Beyond that, thought, there are other subtler questions. Can children be raised healthy and intelligent on a diet provided by way of machines? Can we duplicate those machines when our population increases past the capacity of those we have? Can we be sure that a baby won't succumb to a disease that leaves an adult virtually unaffected? Beyond that again there are the psychological problems; we just had an example when Achmed attacked Ruggiero. What sort of society are we going to devise? It's a horrible responsibility, isn't it? Are we going to try and make a kind of tribal structure, or are we going to fall into old patterns for the sake of their familiarity? Are we going to be communist or capitalist, are we

going to be individualistic or egalitarian; are we going to introduce money or some other kind of comparative scale of entitlement to what there is, are we going to have to evaluate people and say this person gets more than that person of what's available?"

"You've thought this through very deeply, haven't you?" Ian said.

"So have you. And probably Valentine has worked it out in even more detail than the rest of us. It goes without saying that if he'd figured out a solution, even one that was half-way tolerable, he wouldn't be letting us drift the way we are—snapping, backbiting, fretting all the time."

"I wonder how much longer it can last."

"Not very long. Something will have to be done, and soon."

AND WAS, on the thirtieth day of waiting for the ship.

By now, Ian was getting accustomed to the new situation, and that head of his which—so long ago, so far away, in what felt like another universe—he had compared to a haunted house, was once again humming with ideas. It was a vast relief to have something fresh to think about. He spent a long time walking around and around the statue of the Draconian in its plastic case, as though he could read the answer from its curious anomalous surface finish, that gave back such distorted electrical responses. Over

and over the same obsessive phrases revolved in his mind:

To be rewarded. Division of labour. Make the best of what we've got.

But he couldn't be sure whether those related to the vanished natives, to his experience at Ash when wearing the Draconian simulacrum, or to the plight of the humans.

Until, all of a sudden, when he woke on the thirtieth morning it was clear in his mind. He leapt from bed, not stopping longer than was needed to fling on his clothes, and ran from the room heedless of Cathy's cries.

Did I dream it? Did it come together because I slept on it so often? Doesn't matter! All that does matter is to find out whether the machines agree that that's the way it could have happened!

Feverish with excitement, hands shaking so much he could barely plan their movements across the computer read-in at the relic-shed—which he had headed for by reflex born of familiarity, not because it was the nearest—he punched item after item of data into a new programme, gave it the necessary parameters concerning time and geographical distribution and genetic resources and—

"Ian, what are you doing?" Cathy called from the door, hurrying towards him.

"Shut up!" he snapped, and went on adding to the programme; incidence of variation in

the plants dug up from Peat, contrasts between the gene-equivalents in the oldest and the most recent corpses, with special reference to the gravid female whose deformed baby was never born—

"Ian!"

"*Shut up!*" he shouted again, and then, relenting, said in a milder tone, "No, please don't interrupt. If you want to be useful, you could bring me some breakfast from the refectory—coffee and a roll or something of that kind."

"What's so important? What have you come up with?"

"I'll give you three guesses. And if you possess your soul in patience for an hour or two, I'll be able to tell you if I'm right or wrong."

There was a moment of dead silence. Then she said, "Ian, you haven't cracked it, have you? The language, I mean."

"No, but I think I figured out where we went astray. Go on, get me that coffee! It's bound to take me a while before I pack everything relevant into this programme. Hurry and I may still be at it when you come back."

She spun on her heel and ran for the door.

WHEN SHE RETURNED he was indeed still at it, and without looking around said, "Did I refer to an hour or two? It's going to be more like several hours. I keep coming up with things that might

possibly fit, so I'll have to write them in too."

Clearing a space on the workbench beside him so that she could set down the mug of coffee, she said, "But Valentine wants everybody in the refectory right away. He plans to hold a day-long discussion of our prospects."

"Carry on without me," Ian grunted. "I'll leave this when I'm satisfied I'm wrong, or when—by some miracle—it turns out that I'm right."

"But—"

"Go and present my apologies, and leave me alone!"

She bit her lip, hesitated as though about to speak again, and finally complied.

THE DISCUSSION did not go well. There was a feeling of resentment in the air, and even the best-intentioned proposals were liable to be met with irritable, trivial objections. It was as though everyone wanted to vent his or her anger on the people back home who had let them down, and willy-nilly the pent-up anger was overflowing on to people who could not possibly be held to blame.

And the absence of Ian was an extra straw on the camel's back of the meeting; more than once, someone muttered a rude comment and received bitter nods of agreement.

By noon, when Rorschach decreed a break for refreshment, absolutely nothing had been

achieved except that grave offence had been given by Sue Tennant to Nadine Shah, by Olaf Mukerji to Karen Vlady, and by Achmed Hossein to Lucas Wong—all by perfect inadvertence, simply as the result of friction arising during the course of an argument.

Cathy trembled. This augured badly for the future of mankind on this planet. . .

Where's Ian? If only he hadn't refused to join in, if only he'd shown common politeness, things would have gone so much more smoothly—

And at that very moment, when the company was rising and dispersing, the door was flung open and Ian appeared, striding in with clenched fists and shouting exuberantly.

"I found out what happened to the Draconians!"

There was a total, stunned silence. And then, with a hint of renewed hope, as though this at least might lighten the dismal mood of the meeting, Rorschach snapped, "Tell us!"

Ian was grinning like a fool, almost unable to prevent himself from jiggling up and down.

"They went broke! They went broke! They went *bankrupt!*"

XXII

"BUT THAT'S ABSURD," Lucas said after a pause. "Going bankrupt—well, it could bring down a civilisation, but it couldn't

wipe out an entire species."

"It could!" Ian insisted. "Look, it occurred to us to wonder whether the Draconians traded among themselves, and we decided yes, they must have done, but it never occurred to any of us to ask what kind of currency they employed."

Cathy jumped to her feet. "The printed crystals!" she burst out.

"Those can't have been money!" Karen shouted. "You'd find money all over everywhere, not concentrated in great big storehouses—"

"Ingots!" Sue cut in. "Gold ingots, piled up like at Fort Knox, not the actual money but the thing they used to support its value—"

"No, no, *no!*" Ian exclaimed. "Look, somebody get me a beer or something because it's going to take a while to explain, and then I'll show you just how wrong Lucas was to say going broke couldn't kill a whole intelligent race."

"What grounds do you have—?" Abdul began, and he too was interrupted.

"The machines agree with me," Ian declared. "It all fits, every last little bit."

Igor gave a gentle cough. "I think it might be a good idea if we all got ourselves something to drink, and relaxed a little. . . don't you? I'm sure Ian knows what he's talking about, but right now he's a bit too worked up to make himself clear. Which isn't entirely

surprising, hm?"

TEN MINUTES LATER, in a calmer atmosphere, Ian set aside his glass of beer and leaned back in an easy chair, crossing his legs.

"This is what I was so close to at Ash," he said. "I'd been struggling for a month to get to grips with the life-pattern of an intelligent species that changed sex from active juvenile male to relatively inactive fertile female. The functional-female stage is shorter than the male stage in the contemporary species, right?" With a glance at Nadine, who nodded. "And it's followed by an infertile senile stage."

He hesitated. Impatient, Abdul said, "Well, go on!"

"I'm trying to figure out the best order to present the argument in. . . Okay, tackle it this way. What could any given individual accumulate during the active stage that might correspond to wealth, in our terms?"

Olaf whistled loudly. "Hey! Ian, was I right when I said that what we've been calling libraries might be official data-stores? Are those crystals genetic records?"

"Full marks!" Ian was still sounding slightly manic. "No wonder they appear virtually identical after this long a time—each codes not the personality of an individual, but simply his heritage. Remember at one point we were wondering whether they were indeed repositories of individual experience, records of the

dead geniuses whom anyone might go and consult?"

"Only the capacity wasn't adequate," Ruggiero said, leaning forward with intent concentration.

"Exactly. And we know, thanks to Nadine's work, that the natives definitely practised selective breeding of both plants and animals from a very early stage in their history. We can safely hypothesise that given the senses they possessed they may have had an almost instinctive grasp of the principles of eugenics."

"They bred themselves into intelligence," Rorschach whispered.

"That's it. I owe that particular insight to Cathy. She once asked me whether the Draconians would have fallen in love. I said I doubted it. Today I woke up realising why not. If, right from the start of their incredibly rapid ascent towards a technological civilisation, then they must have selected for rationality that took no account of absurd preferences like 'love'. We had a clue right under our noses in the fact that their expansion was calculated from the beginning, as though planned by a machine instead of a living creature. And their population increased at a relatively slow rate, too."

"One of each!" Igor said with a chuckle.

"Yes, correct. They must have attained a degree of rationality we can barely imagine."

"They sound terribly cold-blooded," Cathy said, and shud-

dered.

"No doubt we would have struck them as being intolerably temperamental," Ian countered. "They'd have marvelled at the fact that we took seven thousand years from the Neolithic stage to the epoch of spaceflight, where they took at most half that time."

"Am I being obtuse?" Karen said. "Or have you not yet explained how going bankrupt killed them off?"

"I was just coming to the details of that. I think I already said—excuse me, but my head is buzzing insanely with all the implications—I think I said I started asking what an individual could accumulate by way of reward, or payment."

There was a brief hush. Nadine ventured, "Promises that when he became she, there would be outstanding genetic lines reserved to—uh—to her?"

"That's it. That's what killed them."

IGOR LEAPT to his feet and started pacing back and forth, thumping fist into palm.

"I've almost got it," he said. "You mean that without realising what they were doing, they restricted their genetic pool until it became dangerous, and then it was too late. Like fortunes being concentrated in the hands of a few ultra-powerful families? A sort of genetic capitalism?"

"That's a beautiful way of expressing it," Ian concurred.

"Just a second!" Sue Tennant bridled. "I don't see how they could have reached a point of no return by that means."

"No?" Ian blinked at her. "I'm surprised. It's one of the respects in which their thinking must have most closely paralleled our own. They too suffered from the besetting sin of greed. How often have human beings acted against their own best interests, and particularly on behalf of some small group rather than in favour of the race as a whole? Our history is littered with that type of stupidity. Rational or not, the Draconians could all too easily have fallen into a similar trap. Our doom—if it overtakes us—is likely to stem from the territorial impulse, buried deep in the subconscious; some day somebody may lose control of his better judgment and initiate a war that could destroy civilisation: Anybody want to disagree?"

Two or three people murmured something to the effect that it could well have happened already: witness the failure of the *Stellaris* to return.

"On the other hand," Rorschach said, his bald-high forehead wrinkled with immense concentration, "you're saying the Draconians doomed themselves because each individual wanted to conclude *his* life—I mean life in the male stage—by racking up prospective fathers for *her* young who belonged to the finest possible strains."

"With the result that the offspring would be more intelligent on the purely rational level, in other words would have a higher IQ as we'd term it, but would not necessarily be better fitted to survive in the absolute sense. Like over-breeding a line of show-dogs until they become snappy, neurotic and in the end infertile." Triumphant, Ian reached for his beer again.

"But how does all this fit in with the—I guess we have to stop calling them 'libraries'?" Cathy said. "And the temples, too... though I suppose that's also a misnomer."

"Mm-hm." Wiping his upper lip, Ian nodded. "Not temples. Banks."

"What?"—from several people.

"On top: four *identical* statues, idealised, even down to the perfect regularity of their skin-patterns. Below: a few pitiable crippled corpses, surrounded by such primitive artefacts it's almost incredible, down to a kind of sled that lacked even a wheel to roll it on. A symbol of ultimate riches lordling it over the reality."

"Hey, that makes sense!" Olaf said softly. "All four grandparents of the finest known stock: the best-looking, the most intelligent, the most desirable... Ian, I'm sold. You say you checked this out with the machines?"

Ian nodded.

"Did they produce any—ah—footnotes to what you've been saying?"

"Hell, they were still printing out when I came over here!" Ian answered. "Lord knows how long it will continue. But as soon as the point appeared to have been made, I couldn't wait to share the news with you all."

He beamed around in sheer delight.

Igor halted his pacing back and forth and resumed his chair. He said, "I think I can add one footnote straight away. We've been thinking in terms of the telescope on the moon as the climax of their achievement. They wouldn't have looked at it that way, though, would they?"

"What else, then?" Ruggiero demanded. "Something we haven't found yet?"

"No, the four statues. You yourself worked out how clever they were, how advanced a technique must have been used to give them their special finish. Wouldn't we regard somebody who devised an intelligent machine as having added more to the sum of our knowledge, in the absolute sense, then even the people who discovered the qu-space drive?" He glanced around. "No? Maybe not; I guess our bias in favour of adventure and exploration is pretty strong. But I can see it happening to the Dracnians."

"I still have reservations," Lucas said, frowning. "I mean, they must have known that there were deleterious genes in their heredity, which were liable to in-

teract and produce deformed offspring."

"Equally," Olaf said, "we know there are fatal weaknesses in the human personality which could at any moment make it unsafe to trust people with weapons of mass destruction. That hasn't prevented us building and deploying the weapons, has it?"

"What's more," Karen said, "I could imagine Draconians marveling, on this basis, that we should still have famine on Earth so long after we invented the food-converter! That can't be called rational, can it?"

"No, that's true," Lucas conceded. "Okay: for the moment I'm happy to accept Ian's theory. It's certainly the best we've ever hit on, and it does seem to make a coherent pattern out of the Draconians' entire evolution."

"Wouldn't they have realised before it was too late, though?" Nadine persisted. "How was it they didn't have time to do anything?"

"Maybe they did have time," Ian said. "And chose not to."

"But you said they were far more rational than we are!"

"And Cathy said they were cold-blooded, and Igor, right back when he was first explaining the situation to Ordoñez-Vico, mentioned the possibility of an ideology like Nazism. For all we can tell, they elevated eugenic principles to the status of a never-to-be-questioned absolute; after all, if it took them from mud-huts to

the moon in three thousand years, as it were, it would be dreadfully hard to discard it in a generation or two." Ian emptied his beer-glass.

"On this basis," Ruggiero said, "the printed crystals are more than just—oh—birth certificates!"

"Of course. No doubt each included reference to the credit-commitments obtaining at any given time. Standing to the account of Individual X, who's just entering the neuter stage, are the following items of credit: fifty with genetic line A, ten with line B, two with line C... and so on. Perhaps if line A is regarded as inferior to line C, Mr-about-to-be Mrs X would trade twenty-five holdings in A against an extra holding in C. Oh, there are countless implications to be worked out, but—well, there's the first rough sketch."

"Ah, this is marvellous!" Igor said, rubbing his hands. "This time we're really going to have good news to send to Earth! Ian, I remember Rudolf Weil saying—"

He broke off. Everybody else was staring at him, their eyes cold.

"I think," Rorschach said in a creaking voice, "we ought to go and have lunch as we'd intended to when Ian arrived."

There were nods, and the company dispersed to the food-machines.

THERE WERE so many more ques-

tions to be asked, to round out Ian's theory, that it was not until late in the evening that Cathy was able to corner him alone and hug and kiss him and eventually bury her face against his shoulder and shed a few long-restrained tears.

"Ian, I'm ashamed of not believing you," she whispered.

"What?"

"I mean, of not having believed you. Not having believed you could do it. I think you're wonderful, amazing, fantastic!"

"I'm feeling pretty pleased with myself," he admitted, one hand gently stroking her hair. "Or at any rate I was. Now. . . Oh, darling, wouldn't it be ironical if *Stellaris* never came back?"

"That's what I'm thinking about," she said. "And—yes, ironical is the word. One of the great intellectual achievements of all time, the recovery from a few scraps and shards and corpses of the facts behind the death of a whole intelligent race. . . and the only people ever to know about it would be us!"

"It's too soon to stop hoping for the ship," Ian said.

"Are you sure?"

He didn't answer.

AND THE SHIP didn't come.

XXIII

IT WAS ON the anniversary of the date when *Stellaris* ought to have returned that Valentine Rorschach

committed suicide alone in his office, by plunging a knife into his throat.

SOME LITTLE adjustment had been made to the facts of the future. A settlement had been planned on the most hospitable coast of the island; a survey had been carried out to determine which if any of the native plants could be eaten as they were by human beings, raw or plainly cooked instead of being put through the food-converters; a genetic map had been constructed by Lucas, showing the optimum pattern in which they could exploit their heredity. . . but it was all in the nature of a game, or strictly a pastime. Of course there were lots of things to do. Nobody especially wanted to do them. Not now that Ian's solution to the mystery of the natives had been tested over and over without a flaw being found. It had even been reinforced by the discovery that some of the species suspected of having been modified by the Draconians were themselves genetically under-funded, as it were, and were showing above-average susceptibility to disease combined with below-average fecundity.

So there was little intellectual stimulation to be had. And Rorschach had developed cancer of the bowel.

AFTER THE FUNERAL, a simple ceremony conducted by Lucas,

Cathy said to Ian, "Something must be done! Someone's got to set an example! And it has to be you!"

Ian shook his head. "No, I'm not fit to be in charge. I'm not a leader. My heart wouldn't be in it."

"If not you, who?" She glanced around to make sure they were not in earshot of anybody else, and swung to confront him, clutching at his arm. "Ian, we can't just—just coast into oblivion, for pity's sake! We must take some positive step!"

"What?"

"Start our baby."

It had been put off, and put off. . . He thought about it for a long while. A freak gust brought salt spray from the rocky shore of the island, tossed high over the plateau, and make him blink.

"Do you really want to?"

"I don't know what else can be done to stop us dying of sheer apathy."

"You said you wanted the first to be Igor's."

"I don't have any right to insist."

"It would be a sane decision. If we must start over on this planet, try and build something where even the natives failed. . . yes, we must always try and make sane decisions, whether or not it hurts. Find out if Igor agrees. And—Cathy!"

"Yes?"

"A question you haven't asked, but you must be wondering. I'll

answer it in advance. Yes, I'll love it. Because it's yours."

She was weeping a second later when she embraced him.

"CANCER, I'm afraid," Lucas said reluctantly as Igor resumed his clothes in the bio-medical office. "I imagine you already suspected that, and would rather be told bluntly than fobbed off with double-talk."

Igor nodded. "Of course. It stands to reason that where there are few infections we can even fall sick from, but where the air is always full of alien spores and germs, cancer is bound to be a common cause of death. We didn't need Valentine's death or your specialist knowledge to make that plain." He briskened. "Can it be staved off for a while?"

"Probably for years, even without surgery. But it may become very painful. The lung is a bad site," Lucas hesitated. "Thank you for taking it so well. I wish some other people could treat trivial problems equally calmly."

"It's easy to face a big problem calmly," Igor countered. "The big ones are simple, easy to define. The little ones that won't quite come into focus are what make people irritable and quarrelsome. They know something's wrong and yet they can't quite pin it down."

"There was an American phrase for that kind of talk," Lucas said with a wry smile. "They used to call it cracker-barrel philosophy."

"I notice you use the past tense," Igor said.

Lucas spread his hands. "So far as we're concerned, the whole planet Earth belongs to the past, doesn't it. . . ? By the way, something you didn't mention: did you come for examination because you'd detected symptoms?"

"Not exactly. It's because Cathy wants to start a child with me. Will it be safe?"

Lucas bit his lip. "Good, I'm glad somebody is still capable of doing more than drift along from day to day. Yes, safe insofar as heredity is concerned. As to the risk of the kid dying in infancy. . . ."

"We've got to find out, or there will be two extinct intelligent races here."

"Exactly. Congratulations, Igor; Cathy has admirable good sense."

IT WAS as though the community buckled to, summoned its collective energy, recovered the will to live. Some deep symbolic chord had been struck that resonated in their minds. Instead of talking about the new settlement, they began to build it; instead of analysing the native planets, they took the chance of eating small quantities of the most promising, and suffered nothing worse than a bout of nausea; instead of playing around with genetic lines, they seriously studied them and very shortly Sue and Olaf followed Cathy's example. Lucas recommended holding it at that level for

the first year; two babies would be enough to cope with at the start.

It was a start, though. It was convincing.

"I THINK we're going to pull through," Cathy said softly to Ian as they stood on the headland which overlooked the site of the permanent settlement: a sheltered bay, surrounded by lush plants, that in themselves made the vista attractive if only by contrast with the starkness of the base on its disc of glass in the middle of a desert.

"So do I," Ian concurred, squeezing her hand. "Lucas says the extra oxygen down there, nearer sea-level, may even be good for the kid. They give hyperbaric oxygen therapy on earth if you can pay for it; here it comes as a built-in bonus."

"It isn't quite the way I imagined I was going to start my family," Cathy said. "To be candid, I'm not sure how I did imagine I'd do that, or even whether I was going to at all."

"You would have done. Sooner or later."

"I guess so. . . ." With her eyes she was following the machines, directed by Karen, that were trenching the ground so that piping could be laid for water and sewage. "Even if we are starting under some kinds of handicap," she went on, "there are other ways in which we've got the advantage, aren't there?"

"Right. We have all the resources of a world for the taking; we don't have to pay for anything. When we get our little village ready, it'll be the most luxurious tribal settlement ever built." He chuckled. "Taking all from there, we ought to be able to work wonders in the days to come."

"Ought to. . ." Cathy echoed, and for no apparent reason had to repress a shiver. "Come on, let's go down. I'm getting chilly."

Ian stared at her blankly. "But it's so warm up here, I could— Oh, no! Cathy, we go find Lucas right away!"

BUT THERE was nothing wrong with her: just a transient fluctuation of body-temperature connected with pregnancy. Ian breathed again.

THE TENSIONS between them eased—faded—vanished. One could sense them dwindling from day to day. Perhaps it was because for the first time a human pattern was being lastingly imprinted on this alien world: not merely the transients' accommodation in the buildings at the base or the digs, but houses, homes, designed for occupation and family life. Perhaps it was because human beings are not satisfied with the mere awareness of intellectual achievement, but want to see, touch, admire solid testimony to the invested effort. At any rate, as the weeks passed, more and more of them took to doing things

by hard physical labour which might have been done in half the time by their machines: dragging rocks into position to make foundations, erecting poles, laying floors of sand—to be fused into glass with a carefully-focused solar-furnace beam—and taking pride in making them flat with no more help than a straight-edge and a level.

"I never realised just how much I knew about making things," Igor commented happily to Ian one day.

"I hope you passed the talent on," Ian answered with a chuckle. "It's going to be needed!"

THE DAY the settlement was ready for living in, they held a party: a grand celebration of the kind that they had hoped to hold when the ship next came back. . .but nobody was tactless enough to refer to that. There was music, and this time it wasn't all from tapes, because Olaf had found a native plant—perhaps modified by the Draconians for some unknown reason—whose tubular stems were of uniform size and near-uniform length, out of which he had made six-hole pipes on the Indian pattern. Handing these out, he instructed the company to close and open certain holes in turn while Sue beat on a little drum she had made from a kind of shell found on the beach covered with the ballonet-skin of one of what they

were now casually calling "birds" even if they were more like aerial jellyfish. Unexpectedly they realised they were playing nursery-rhyme tunes in three-part harmony.

There was dancing, too, and there were stupid childish games that made them laugh inordinately, and there were stale but funny stories, the older the better as though they wanted to reach back into the past before it escaped them altogether behind a barrier as impermeable as quassia to a naked man.

And there was a special treat when it came time to eat supper: a dish for each of them except Sue and Cathy of the first native plant proved to be completely edible. The machines said it was, and turn and turn about volunteers had confirmed the assumption, starting with a mouthful, then taking a handful, and finally making a complete meal. It was a kind of seed-pod, the colour of an eggplant and the shape of a pear, and it tasted—well, it tasted vaguely. . . . It. . .

It was an *acquired* taste, Igor said in an exaggeratedly judicious tone, and they clapped the exactness of his description. Nonetheless it was delicious, as being the first sign that one day a man might walk this world without the aid of complicated machines.

All in all it was a perfectly wonderful party, and when eventually they grew so tired they had to make for bed, they were still

chuckling and a few of the most energetic danced to the accompaniment of their own whistling as they dispersed into their new beautiful cottage-like homes.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING Lucas Wong did not wake up. Following computerised instructions, Nadine performed an autopsy on him, and discovered he had been killed by a cerebral haemorrhage. A weak-walled artery had burst.

All their new-found hope evaporated; it was instantly as though the euphoria of the past months had been a dream, and suddenly they had been rudely aroused.

It was useless to remind themselves that this could have happened at any time, and that the fact was proved by the medical computer-store; dutifully, Lucas had conducted a routine examination of himself at the same intervals as he checked out everybody else, and last time he had realised he was suffering from acute hypertension and one of his leg-veins had varicosed. . . in respect of which he had taken the proper medication.

No, those qualifications were at most palliative. What hurt was that the doctor was dead. Even Cathy, who sometimes seemed to Ian the most level-headed of them all, woke crying in the night from bad dreams in which because there was no Lucas to deliver her baby it came into the world deformed and imbecilic, whereas if

he'd survived he could, as though by magic, have ensured that the child was tall and beautiful and brilliant.

IT WAS A TIME for looking up data in the medical computer-store concerning post-partum depression and even maternal schizophrenia. . . only to discover that the authorities back on Earth had never for one moment believed such information might be necessary. There was neither help nor guidance on the files.

THE BABY was absolutely normal when she was born: a girl weighing just over three kilos, with hair that she lost a day or two later and then re-grew.

She lived to be exactly—to the hour—one month old. Sue's baby, a boy, was premature, and survived a mere eleven days.

XXIV

“**I**S THERE a Creator who is jealous of intelligence? Looking at thirty-two graves I could believe it. Feeling this unspeakable loneliness I could imagine that I'm hated because I did what was forbidden: fathomed a mystery that was never meant to be solved. . .”

But that was maudlin rambling, and these writing-materials were too precious to waste. Bleary-eyed, seated at a table made from a salvaged scrap of aluminium,

shivering so much his hand threatened to distort the words he was inscribing with acid dye on other and yet other plates of metal, Ian groaned. It had taken him a long time to work out how he might leave a message on something more durable than paper or magnetic tape.

This idea had come to him when he was setting up an improvised headstone over a new grave.

Achmed's, I think, or was it Ruggiero's. . . ? Does it matter?

Even now the suspicion haunted him that he had chosen the less-than-best means; metal too could be corroded, these slow awkward words could be dissolved much as they had been etched. . . But he was in great pain, and what little concentration he could summon might better be applied to leaving a blurred message that none at all. He gathered his forces and continued.

...THIRTY-TWO GRAVES. No, we didn't start another baby after the shock and horror of losing first Cathy's, then Sue's. One of those graves, complete with a marker, is for me. I've been sleeping in it since I recovered enough from my last illness to move about and do things like digging and writing.

I think I've gone insane. In fact I'm sure I have. But I'm not surprised. I've been alone for a long time now. At the end there were four of us. I mean I wasn't the one who lasted longest, not really; because I just collapsed one

day—the world started to swim around me and Olaf said I had a five-degree fever and found me some place to lie down and brought me some sort of medicine. . . I'd started to believe that the food-converters weren't working any longer when you switched them to the drug-mode. I mean so many people had died even with what was supposed to be the best medicine. And I guess I was wrong because I got better—well, a few days later I could get up and find something to drink, just a puddle of rain-water but I was terrible thirsty, and. . .

Well, there they were. The others. Dead as mutton. The last and toughest except me: Olaf, and Achmed, and Ruggiero. Funny; we thought the women were going to be the toughest, same as back on Earth. Only, you see, Cathy killed herself, and so did Sue, and Karen got in this lunatic fight with Achmed that time when Achmed was delirious and was so terrified of dying without a son—some kind of Muslim hangup—and she lost such a lot of blood she. . .

Never mind. I put what I could think of to say about them on the gravestones. Grave-markers. Whatever.

And of course the way they died was the thing I was most aware of. Like the babies. I had to do the autopsies on both of them. Weird. Nadine should have done them, same as for Lucas,

but somehow she said she couldn't face it, and I. . . Well, maybe I was just the person who wanted to know the answer that much more than anybody else did. I cut them up. Like a butcher. Had nightmares for years afterwards. I still do. I think it's been years. Keep seeing in my dreams the way the internal organs spilled out on the big sterile table. If I get reincarnated next time I want to be a vegetarian, a Hindu or something and very orthodox. I want to forget that, except I can't when I'm asleep.

I got to stop wasting this ink-stuff!

STARTING OVER, next day. I was going to explain about the babies. In their lungs we found a kind of puffy fungus thing. We got it all worked out. An aerophytic plant, an equivalent to the orchids you find on Earth. But instead of landing in full view on the trunk of a tree, or a branch or whatever, it starts its life-cycle in some dark warm crevice where there's plenty of moisture. It's only the size of a yeast-spore when it drifts around looking for a place to start growing, and it's sort of delicate until it gets a proper grip on life. In the lungs of an adult, it simply drowns in the regular phlegmy secretions. All of us must have breathed in spores like that and just coughed them up again. The babies couldn't. I wish I didn't keep wondering about poor Igor and the cancer he had in his

lungs. I'm sure it could have started from almost any cause even if he didn't ever smoke cigarettes. I mean back on Earth if he breathed the exhaust from an unfiltered car or something. But he died in such agony and he took so long about it and nobody deserved that much suffering, nobody, not even a mass murderer, and Igor was the kindest and gentlest person in the world! I mean both worlds. I hated watching him die. I guess if I am crazy that was when it started. I know it was his loss that kicked Cathy over the edge, not just the kid's death but his too. I think I already put it down some place that he was— Oh, on the grave-marker. I keep on mentioning grave-markers but that's what I see most of when I look up. I'm sitting facing them so when I forget what I ought to be saying I can look up and remember, oh of course, we had somebody called Valentine Rorschach who was the Director, and we had Lucas Wong who was the doctor and chief biologist, and the rest of the people I wish were here to keep me company!

RE-READING what I managed to write yesterday, and feeling today a lot better than I've felt for ages—not sweating or shaking nearly so much—I realise I'm wasting time and ink. I'm talking about things that could be pieced together from other sources. But I guess I should write down what

we found out here, because the other night—I think—I saw an electrical storm up there on the plateau where we left the base, and a lightning-strike could play merry hell with the computer memories, hm? Down here at the settlement, where we shouldn't have moved to because if we'd stayed up in that dry dusty air those babies wouldn't have inhaled spores and suffocated—but maybe they would, who can say? Forget it. They're dead.

Yes, anyway. We found out that the Draconians imbred to the point of simple genetic collapse because they used commitment to fertilise each other as the basis for their medium of exchange. In other words, they counted their fortune according to the excellence of the genetic lines that would father their children when they shifted into the female stage. Within a very short time—about a thousand generations—they had so depleted their gene-pool that they lost their immunity to some disease, or some recessive gene became endemic, or both or more than that. Never mind. They're dead too. And they brought their doom on themselves, I'm certain of that. In fact it was among the first clues I had to their capacity for being stupid even if they were brilliant. Oh, they were so like us in their faults! I can even imagine we might have become friends if our time in the universe had overlapped. . . . Never mind. They had all these biological skills; what

would be the first use they made of them? Prolong the active-male stage, obviously. That was when things really got done.

On top of which they wanted to be fertilised, when they turned female, from *only* the best lines. The longer they could postpone the day of reckoning, the better chance they had of accumulating good commitments: maybe not from the original person making the contract, but from his/her offspring, or siblings, or kinfolk. So it would have been desirable to breed for a short female stage. In the end they overdid it. There were only females with short fertile periods, capable of having one or two offspring, but jealously guarding the right to be fecundated because they'd spent their active lives investing in it. No doubt they had regulations to punish males who fertilised females they were not under contract to. And enforced the regulations brutally. I don't know. I'm not as well as I thought. I'm not sure if I got that right or whether it refers to Earth.

I WISH I hadn't put down "Earth" in the last line I wrote yesterday. I've been struggling not to think about Earth. I keep having this other crazy dream—I think I said something about one of the dreams I get but this one is different—where I wake up in the morning and there's *Stellaris* coming down and everybody turns out to greet her and I see

Valentine and Cathy and Igor and everybody and we're all waiting there until the airlock opens and then out comes Colonel Weil all beaming and cheerful and I remember he's been retired and I look around and it isn't my friends who are standing with me to welcome the ship.

It's Draconians. Thousands of them. All as huge as the statues we found at Peat. They loom over me and pay no attention to my existence, just walk into the ship one after another and the lock closes behind them and off they go, to somewhere—I don't know—and there I am, alone, in the middle of the plateau and there aren't even any buildings.

When I have that dream, I wake up with my throat so sore I guess I must have been screaming for a long time. Just as well there isn't anybody to hear me.

I WAS GOING to face thinking about Earth, only yesterday I got very sick again. I've been passing blood. I don't expect I have much longer to go.

It gets very hard to drag metal plates here to write on and making this acid ink seems to be doing wrong things to the food-converters, I mean it was supposed to be okay to re-set them to make practically anything just synthesising from the available elements but having stuff that will bite into metal may be doing something to the innards. . . Oh, I don't know. Just keep on as long

as I can. It distracts me. Speaking of something being done to in-nards, I brought up my breakfast today. Thought it was kind of odd when I ate it. But I don't have the skills to make tests and analyse the food and whatever.

I got this bruise on my arm. Taking a terrible time to go away.

Earth. Yes. I vaguely recall the place. And of course the whole reason I'm writing this down is because I'm sure they're going to send the ship back soon, or another ship in a hundred years' time maybe, and I want somebody to be able to find out what happened here, obviously not just to the Draconians but to us too, in case they get all sorts of wrong ideas like it's not legal to go to another star. Riridu—ridiculous! (Mustn't make spelling mistakes because of wasint ink.)

Look, it isn't like that at all! Sure, the Draconians failed because of what they bred out of themselves—must have done. Discounted the importance of things that had enabled them to evolve from the brute because they were so high on the idea of being able to reason they didn't worry about losing immunities and such so long as they were able to look better and think better and invent more ingenious gadgets. I can hear them arguing in my head sometimes: so what does it matter if they have an underdeveloped glitch in that family? We didn't hear of a death from glitchitis in umpty-dozen

seasons, did we?

Or words to that effect. No, I don't mean words. I mean. What I mean is, it was what they bred out of themselves that they tripped over. With us, my best guess from nineteen lightyears away is that what did for us was what we didn't breed into ourselves. Like compassion, and generosity, and love.

You know, I'd rather this message never got read than that it was picked up by somebody on the winning side in a war that wiped out half mankind. I just wouldn't want people that dangerous to go roaming around the galaxy. I'd be ashamed to have my race remembered and recognised as vicious killers. All of a sudden my mind is very lucid. I think that's a bad sign. I recall how Nadine became very articulate and forceful just a few hours before she died, and so did Igor in spite of being doped to the eyeballs. I feel slightly cold, but very much in control. I ought to be hungry, but I have no appetite. The bruise on my arm is bright purple, as though new red blood is leaking from the capillaries just under the skin.

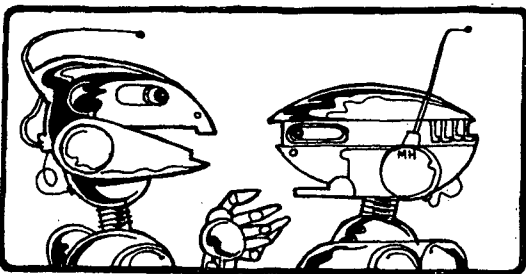
And that's not the only place. I just realised I have a sweetish taste in my mouth. My gums are bleeding.

Oh well.

You know, I often wondered about being aware of death. It isn't too bad. Not compared with what the Draconians went

(continued on page 118)

**SUSAN
WOOD
GLICKSOHN**
the
Clubhouse



IT IS A PROUD and lonely thing to be a fan.

Or it was, back in the Golden Age of BEMS and Galactic Heroes, when the literary establishment, not to mention your parents and teachers, sneered at that escapist trash, "sci-fi".

Now, though, sf—science fiction, speculative fiction, speculative fantasy or whatever—is not only popular, but respectable. Jophan, instead of hiding his AMAZING behind his math text, may be sitting in a college classroom arguing about the Heinlein Hero with someone like me.

Hi. I'm Susan Wood Glicksohn; and Ted White's just asked me to take over *The Clubhouse*. When I was eight, I discovered *Lucky Starr and the Pirates of the Asteroids*; when I was eighteen, I discovered sf fandom (in a tunnel under the Arts building at Carleton University, Ottawa). I've been fanacking ever since. For a living, I teach English literature at the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus where part of my "work" is really fanac. This semester, I persuaded my department

to let me teach a course in science fiction.

It isn't even a lonely thing, any more, being an academic who confesses an interest in "that sci-fi stuff." Alexei Panshin, in the December 1971 issue of *FANTASTIC*, discussed the growing scholarly interest in sf, and answered some of the carping about academics taking over "our" field and making it dull. As he pointed out, anyone teaching sf is doing so because he/she finds it *interesting*. Besides, when I was an undergraduate, I tried (unsuccessfully) to establish a science fiction class for the same reason Regina Campus people are taking mine: for the opportunity to learn more about sf, read books you enjoy, and actually get credit for it too.

If that prospect appeals to you, as a teacher or a student, there's a fan publication to help you.

TEACHING SF (Jack Williamson, Box 761, Portales, NM 88130; one-shot, offset; 61 pp., \$1.00. October, 1973.)

Jack Williamson has been read-

ing and writing sf since AMAZING STORIES was a newly-founded Gernsback pulp. He's a fan. He's an sf scholar, author of a doctoral thesis on H.G. Wells. He's an academic, a professor of English at Eastern New Mexico University, where he's been teaching a science fiction course since 1964.

Teaching SF is Williamson's third, updated edition of a survey of sf in colleges begun in 1970. The project's aim is "to help improve the image of science fiction—often scorned, I think, because it is a literature of ideas in a world where intelligence is suspect. I hoped to help the prospective teacher convince his colleagues of the real academic worth of science fiction, to help him discover the methods and examples of his peers."

The image-building is found in Williamson's introduction, in his defence of sf as a predictive literature which "explores the possible futures in which the students are going to be spending their lives, futures that other literatures ignores," and therefore "has a special relevance to life in our transitional times." He repeats pro-sf arguments by Amis, Asimov, Vonnegut and others, which someone like me can borrow to lend weight and impressiveness to a course proposal.

Williamson also reprints a long essay originally published in *Publishers Weekly*, in which he discusses sf as a genre and an

academic concern. It contains little that would be new to the dedicated sf reader, much that could be quoted to impress a department chairman. A brief history traces sf back to the usual Big Names: Plato, More, Swift, Wells. Williamson, developing C.P. Snow's "two cultures" concept, suggests that the universities, as guardians of a pessimistic "traditional academic culture," have rejected "the whole idea of progress," and with it sf, the product of an optimistic popular "culture of science." Now, however, the "avalanche of change" has "become too tremendous to be ignored"; sf is popular, and the universities "are joining the parade." He lists the institutions which collect sf materials, from pulps to manuscripts; describes courses; suggests possible texts; and ends by discussing his own course, which presents "the two conflicting positions on science and progress" from Homer to Asimov and Clarke.

The core of *Teaching SF*, however, is 22½% pages of college course listings. Williamson estimates that close to 500 sf classes are being offered, or have been offered in the past three years. Though many seem to be traditional surveys of utopian literature, fantasy, and sf offered by English departments, an impressive number are student-run or free-school classes, experimental in approach—as are the courses offered by chemistry, physics, his-

tory, psychology, sociology and religion departments. There's no "right" way to teach sf; all that's needed is someone who wants to set up a course.

Williamson also provides a brief list of highschool sf classes; some sample reading lists (the most popular books, he's found, are *Canticle for Liebowitz*, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, and *War of the Worlds*); and, best of all, a long course description from Gary Gosharian, teaching sf at Northeastern University with, apparently, enthusiasm, imagination, and a sense of humour. Who knows—maybe sf will liven up the universities!

Williamson plans to issue a supplement next spring, listing new courses. If you're teaching sf, or want to, contact him.

EXTRAPOLATION, v.15, no. 1 (Thomas D. Claeson, Box 3186, The College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio 44691; semi-annual, offset; 96 pp., \$1.75 or \$3.00/year. December, 1973.)

FOUNDATION #4 (Charles Barren, The Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Barking Precinct, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS, England; quarterly, offset; 104 pp., 50p or 4/£2.00, 4/US\$6.00. July, 1973.)

The serious and intelligent consideration of sf has always been a major part of fan writing. As sf

became respectable, so the markets for our book reviews, bibliographies and analytical essays grew. Ideally, since people like me can now get academic "credit" for writing about sf, we can give more time and thought to it, with the satisfaction of knowing that our work won't be forgotten in small-circulation fanzines, that it will be treated with a certain respect, that it will be open to a wide range of critical discussion. Ideally.

What we can lose is our spontaneity.

Extrapolation and *Foundation* both illustrate the problems fandom faces going to college. Both are journals, produced for the scholarly community and the serious sf reader. Both are professionally printed, with a book rather than magazine format. Both present page after page of small black type on smooth white paper, unbroken by artwork or graphics; physically, they demand the intense concentration their material requires. Both present serious discussions of particular works, and of the general nature of sf; both print reviews, especially of scholarly studies related to sf; both tend to offer factual, impersonal editorials. *Extrapolation* has no letter-column; *Foundation* prints one letter about Dyson shells, and one chatty letter from James Tiptree, Jr., who complains that the previous issue "was possibly over-heavy in the direction of respect-

ability and the higher think." After reading three serious sf journals in one night, I'm tempted to agree with him that "I'd rather read a page of Richard E. Geis gruffling around in his smelly underwear than the most elegant attack on the sf definitional problem." Why? Because, as Tiptree confesses, "I am a mental slob"? Or because, in the end, watching people live is more interesting than trying to analyse how they think? Because the formality of the scholarly format, the apparatus of footnotes and bibliography, the polysyllabic vocabulary and complex sentence structure, the impersonality of the journal, all impose a barrier between writer and reader?

Much of the actual material in *Extrapolation* and *Foundation* would not be out of place in a quality genzine. In fact, articles have often overlapped: Chip Delany's "About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy Five Words" was printed in Geis' *Science Fiction Review* as well as *Extrapolation*; Darko Suvin's "Cognition and Estrangement: An Approach to SF Poetics" appeared in *Science Fiction Commentary* and in *Foundation*.

Generally, though, the approach and presentation differ. Angus Taylor's "Can God Fly? Can He Hold Out His Arms and Fly?" in *Foundation* #4 develops ideas about Philip K. Dick's fiction and worldview. So does his "Philip K. Dick and the

Psychogenic Origins of Death by Meteor-Strike" in *Energumen* #14. In the fanzine, Taylor not only observes that Dick has a gift of presenting serious subjects in a humorous, conversational way, but shows, through his own writing, what he means: "Everything about Dick's stories is preposterous. I love it. Preposterousness is the essence of good science fiction. To hell with facts. Science fiction has little to do with facts, but much to do with truth."

In the scholarly journal too, form follows function. Taylor relates Dick's view of reality, his understanding of "the importance of the improbable as a method of casting light on the probable" to modern sf, and to contemporary culture, in an erudite, formal, "academic" manner:

"The cultural patterns of separate social systems reveal the codification of separate views of reality held collectively by their respective members. In *The Game-Players of Titan*, radically different world-views generate conflict between humans and aliens, each species seeing the other in a negative light, each able to perceive only a partial truth about the other. On the inter-personal or inter-societal level, the *disintegration* of relationships means the dissolution of culturally-conditioned reality and the emergence of more 'primitive' modes of perception, often characterized by visionary or extra-sensory experiences."

The writing is not "good" or "bad" but *different* for the different media and audiences. Fan-zines, even at their most impressive (offset, with quality artwork, pro writing, and a slick look) talk to their readers. Scholarly journals, by their very nature, lecture.

Extrapolation lectures admirably, and with authority. Now celebrating its fifteenth year of publication, it remains the first, and most prestigious, of the scholarly sf periodicals, journal of both the MLA seminar on science fiction and the Science Fiction Research Association. Its editor, Tom Claeson, is both a First Fandomite and a well-known sf scholar. Its writers develop ideas about sf with knowledge, sometimes with style.

The current issue presents a complete spectrum of serious approaches to sf. H.W. Hall provides a practical, straightforward survey of existing sf bibliographies, pointing out their limitations, providing models, and suggesting possible projects. At the opposite extreme, Michael W. McClintock, Ronald Munson, and Joanna Russ all discuss sf theory.

Why more "what is sf" debates? McClintock suggests that the process of "working out a definition for 'science fiction' becomes at least partly an exercise in the rhetoric of respectability," an attempt to associate sf with realistic fiction, or science, or fantasy, instead of with "the stuff in those

magazines with the bug-eyed monsters on the covers." Besides, no one knows what, exactly, sf can be or do. My class started off agreeing that sf was what we meant when we pointed to it—and ended up an hour later out in the corridor still arguing over what we were pointing to, and why, and how it worked.

Even in these three articles, there are signs that a "poetics of sf," a set of theoretical assumptions, is developing within the field. McClintock discusses opposing definitions by Heinlein and Panshin; Russ takes as her starting point Delany's "About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy Five Words." She also takes issue with that trend in criticism/justification which links sf with fantasy. Where Munson sees sf as "the literature of possibility," Russ sees it as a literature dealing with what is neither possible nor impossible, that which hasn't happened, as distinct from fantasy which deals with that which could not happen.

Ideas argue with ideas. Only Russ, however (possibly because she is a writer as well as scholarly theoretician) shows a real intellectual excitement, combined with a tough-minded concern with the nature and function of what she is doing, not just with the rhetoric around it.

In the rest of the issue, the critics analyse; Carl B. Yoke's discussion of the Japanese Noh play as device and symbol in Zelazny's

Damnation Alley is particularly useful. Elaine L. Kleiner illustrates the negative side of academic writing with "Joseph Conrad's Forgotten Role in the Emergence of SF." Her discussion of *The Inheritors* (an obscure novel by Conrad and Ford Madox Ford published in 1901) seems a mechanical exercise; the parallels to sf, forced. She never succeeds in making the reader care about what she herself calls "a flawed and stumbling work."

Rebecca M. Pauly's "The Moral Stance of Kurt Vonnegut," at the other extreme, is serious in a positive way. She combines thorough research and thinking with a clear, unpedantic style. What distinguishes her study of Vonnegut's "frustrated but determined longing to love life," however, is her own obvious love for what she is doing, her enjoyment of ideas and of the process of working them out. As a good scholar, she can share both her ideas and her enthusiasm.

In *Foundation #2*, Charles Barren wrote that "the people who read science fiction are not ordinary readers at all. They are readers who seek intellectual protein—solid meat—and are not content with the bulky fats and carbohydrates that can be appropriately symbolized in England as the overcooked potato chips of the creative imagination. Perhaps the gap between the ordinary readers and the academics is narrower than we thought.

"The gap becomes narrower still when we consider some of the fallacies in our usual opinions of academics. . . . We simply caricature the academic mind when we see it as humourless, pedantic and ponderous. The academic is serious, because he thinks his subject matters; he need not be a solemn man."

Foundation #4 is serious, but not solemn. It seems aimed at a general sf reader, someone looking for both an intellectual challenge, and entertainment; someone who might see the film version of *Solaris* (reviewed by Brian Aldiss), or be interested in the impact of Malthusian social theory on sf (discussed by Tom Shippey) or pick up *Chariots of the Gods* (whose "armless and headless theories" are neatly dissected by John Sladek).

Perhaps, as a reader, I'm a filthy-pro worshipper; but, as in *Extrapolation*, the highlight of the issue is a writer talking about sf. Comparing Ursula LeGuin's "A Citizen of Mondath" with Joanna Russ' essay illustrates the difference between the two journals. Both writers are articulate, thought-provoking; but where Russ is arguing a theory, LeGuin is, directly and conversationally, discussing her development as a writer. Like anything else she writes, it's marvellous. Here's LeGuin on her influences:

"We kids read science fiction, in the early 40's: *Thrilling Wonder*, and *Astounding* in that giant

format it had for a while, and so on. I liked 'Lewis Padgett' best, and looked for his stories, but we looked for the trashiest magazines, mostly, because we liked trash. I recall one story that began, 'In the beginning was the Bird.' We really dug that bird."

LeGuin on her artistic development after *Rocannon's World*: "In the next books I kept on pushing at my own limitations and at the limits of science fiction. That's what the practice of an art is, you keep looking for the outside edge. When you find it you make a whole, solid, real, and beautiful thing; anything less is incomplete."

Finally, LeGuin on sf criticism: "What almost all of us need is some genuine, serious, literate criticism: some standards. I don't mean pedantry and fancy academic theorizing. I mean just the kind of standards which any musician, for instance, has to meet. . . . In science fiction, sometimes it seems that so long as it's science fiction at all, the fans will love it—briefly; therefore the publishers will put it in print—briefly; therefore the writer is likely to settle for doing much less than his best. The mediocre and the excellent are praised alike by aficionados, and ignored alike by outsiders."

If *Extrapolation*, *Foundation* and the other serious journals have any function, it is to remedy that situation.

Other serious-to-scholarly magazines:

CYPHER #10 (James Goddard, Plover's. Barrow, School Road, Nomansland, Salisbury, Wilts., U.K.; irregular, mimeo; 55pp., 20p, 5/1; or from U.S. agent Cy Chauvin, 17829 Peters, Roseville, MI 48066, 60¢, 5/\$3.00.)

In the absence of *Speculation*, *Cypher* has become the leading British sercon fanzine. This issue features James Blish interviewing (or, rather, chatting with) Brian Aldiss; and more good art (especially by Judith Anne Laurence) than is usual in British fanzines.

JOURNAL OF POPULAR CULTURE VII:1 (Ray Browne, University Hall, Bowling Green University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403; quarterly, offset; 250 pp., \$4.00, 4/\$15.00, 8/\$25.00, students 4/\$7.50. Summer, 1973.)

Though "popular culture" covers a multitude of topics, sf-related articles appear fairly frequently; this issue features an essay on Anthony Burgess and an interview with Ray Bradbury.

RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY v6, no. 1, whole no. 21 (Leland Sapiro, Box 14451, University Station, Gainesville, FLA. 32604; irregular, offset; 95 pp., 60¢, 4/\$2.00. August, 1973)

Highlights of an interesting issue are Doc Lowndes' Boskone X speech, "Eulogy for the Dying Science Fiction Magazines"; Harry Warner Jr. on FAPA; and

excellent reviews of *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* and *Beyond Apollo* by Douglas Barbour, a talented writer and critic who, reversing a trend, is finding his way from the university world into fandom.

SCIENCE FICTION COMMENTARY 35-36-37 (Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia; irregular, mimeo; 146 pp [!], no price though an increase to US\$1.00 is forecast. August, 1973.)

"This issue splits very much down the middle," as Bruce notes, with *SFC*'s serious intellectual tradition upheld by George Turner's lengthy analysis of *Solaris*; Darko Suvin's survey of Soviet sf; and a long, fascinating, infuriating article by Stanislaw Lem, "SF: A Hopeless Case—With Exceptions." For Lem, "The important question is: even if science fiction were born in the gutter, living on trash for years on end, why can't it get rid of the trash for good?"

The personal side of *SFC* continues to develop in "I Must Be Talking To My Friends," the lettercol-with-Gillespie's-conversation; and in a long personal article by Tom Collins. Quibble: any zine this long demands an index or table of contents. The editor, currently travelling in Europe, is physically and mentally in transition; so is *SFC*. I look forward to the next issues.

Other fanzines:

The scholarly magazines, with their relatively high circulation which includes bookstores and libraries, often provide a reader's first contact with fandom. I started off, fannish eons ago, with *Extrapolation* and *Riverside Quarterly*. Now I've got a mailbox full of assorted zines, all chattering away. Fandom, as Les Nirenberg once said, is a mail-order cocktail party. But that's another column. Meanwhile, a recent sample, unrated because my reactions are purely ideosyncratic and certainly unreliable as a buying guide. I'll tell you what I think, and more important why, in the long reviews; I don't like sticking arbitrary numbers on things.

ANTITHESIS #2 (Chris Sherman, 700 Parkview Terrace, Minneapolis, MN 55416; irregular, multicolour ditto; 23 pp., 25¢. December, 1973. Genzine.)

FIAWOL vol. 2 no. 4 (Arnie and Joyce Katz, 59 Livingston St., Apt. 6B, Brooklyn, NY 11201; biweekly, mimeo; 4 pp., sample in return for address label and stamp. January 12, 1974. The fabulous fannish newszine, or "the insurgent fanzine of honest lies.")

GEGENSCHNITT #12 (Eric Lindsay, 6 Hillcrest Ave., Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia; irregular, mimeo; 14 pp., "50¢ US, 30¢ Aust., 25 p UK, or anything reasonably close to that in other currencies, for as long ahead as you want to risk." November,

1973. personal/genzine.)

*GRANFALLOON #18. (Linda and Ron Bushyager, 1614 Evans Ave., Prospect Park, PA 19076; irregular, mimeo; 58pp., 75¢, no long-term subs. December, 1973. Genzine. Recommended.)

LOCUS #152 (Dena and Charles Brown, Box 3938, San Francisco, CA 94119; twice monthly, mimeo; 8pp., 40¢ or 18/\$6.00. December 22, 1973. "The newspaper of the science fiction field," professionally-oriented newszine.)

NOTES FROM THE CHEMISTRY DEPARTMENT #1 (Denis Quane, Box CC, East Texas Station, Commerce, TX 75428; irregular, mimeo; 10pp., 25¢. Genzine,

with emphasis on "the science in science fiction," and on recent developments in science.)

*OUTWORLDS #18 (Bill and Joan Bowers, Box 148, Wadsworth, Ohio 44281; quarterly, mimeo; 36 pp., 5/\$4.00. December, 1973. Genzine. Recommended.)

*SYNDROME #3 (Frank Lunney, 212 Juniper St., Quakertown, PA 18951; irregular, mimeo; 42pp, "the usual." Fannish genzine. Recommended.)

Fanzines for review should be sent to Susan Wood Glicksohn, 139 Mayfair Crescent, Regina, Sask. S4S 4J1, Canada.

—SUSAN WOOD GLICKSOHN

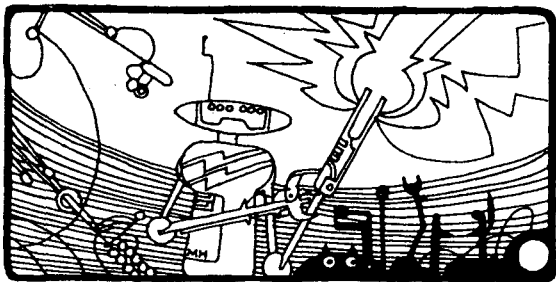
Total Eclipse (cont. from page 109). through, knowing they were going to become extinct. For all I can tell, right this minute the *Stellaris* may be broadcasting frantic signals, trying to make us answer. I don't particularly want to go and look, though. I'm tired. I'm very old. Being alone makes one feel old. I wish I didn't have one more thing I want to say that I can't quite remember, because it's important and I have to carry on until I do recall it in case I break off and find I can't start again—Got it.

I was going to say this. We mustn't MUST NOT let the pattern spread. We mustn't quit, mustn't give up, mustn't act in such a fashion that when one day some species on some other planet goes looking for friends all that can be found is ruins and corpses and

fossils. Right here we figured out why the Draconians didn't make it—don't say "Ian Macauley figured it out", say always THEY figured it out, human beings, a whole bunch working together. Make kids excited about that, make them admire it, make them want to do the same sort of thing! But never let them forget that just thinking isn't enough. You can become arrogant by thinking, you can imagine you know it all and there are always things you don't know that can wreck your hopes and smash your dreams.

I MEANT to say something else. I'm so cold, though. I keep yawning and blood trickles out of my mouth when I open it. I want to go and join Cathy. I love her very much and I never had time to tell her so the way I wanted to. So I guess I—— —JOHN BRUNNER

...OR SO YOU SAY



Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced on one side of each sheet, and addressed to Or So You Say, Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.

Dear Ted,

Today i received a copy of a letter sent to this column from one Thomas C. Watson, commenting on my letter in the December AMAZING STORIES. It's not often i have an opportunity to "answer" a letter in one of your columns before it's published, so i'd like to take this opportunity to do just that with Mr. Watson's letter. ("Oh, no, here we go again!") As i said in a previous loc to this column, my list, which was deliberately incomplete, was deliberately calculated to produce tons of letters supplying the names of Isaac Asimov and Arthur Clarke as the two missing greats from my list. In that way i was trying to be "cute." But judging from Mr. Watson's letter, this wasn't gotten across. But looking back now it becomes clear that i *unintentionally* left out the name of one great sf author, the name of the late C.M. Kornbluth. This would make my list one of 51

names and throw the whole thing out the window. After all, 51 is such an *uneven* number.

Now i could go on at length and debate the substitutions Mr. Watson suggests for the list in his letter, but i'd just like to make a few brief remarks on cases that particularly struck me. First, generally, i tried to do a list of *science fiction* greats and deliberately excluded primarily fantasy writers, no matter how great they were. Then, getting into specifics, i can't imagine anyone confusing del Rey and Farmer. Aside from the fact that they both have Spanish names, first in one case and last in the other, their writing is almost as far apart as that of Ellison and (Doc) Smith. And, yes, i've *heard* of Wyndham, but i didn't even like *Day of the Triffids* or *The Midwich Cuckoos*, both of which i read. And i actually enjoyed the joke about Chapdelaine. You see: contrary to widespread opinion, i *can* and *do* laugh at myself.

To change the subject somewhat, regarding the subject of your last editorial on the federal government's DEA, here's a copy of a letter i received from The Justice

Department in response to a letter of mine on the subject sent some time ago to then Attorney General Elliot Richardson. I offer it for what it's worth. Of particular interest should be the first three paragraphs. I wonder, however, if these attitudes will be changed now that we once again have a Mitchell/Kleindest type SS man as Attorney General.

LESTER BOUTILLIER

2726 Castiglione St.

New Orleans, La., 70119

Before moving on to the letter Lester enclosed (below), I must take this opportunity to remark to Lester that, when typing on a typewriter which has no key for the digit "1", one should use the lower-case "L" and not the upper-case "I". . . —TW

Dear Mr. Boutillier:

On October 7, 1973, you wrote to the Attorney General expressing your concern over the actions of Federal Narcotic Agents in Collinsville, Illinois, in April 1973. We at DEA are also extremely concerned about them.

As a result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the agents involved were indicted by a Federal Grand Jury on a variety of criminal charges. In addition, they have been suspended without pay for an indefinite period, and proceedings are under way to remove them from Government service.

Both the Giglottos and the Askews have filed suits for damages; and if it is found that they were un-

justly harmed, settlements will be made.

Federal agents were also involved in the raid in Eureka, California, which resulted in the death of Dirk Dickenson; however, I must point out that the raiding party was acting in the line of duty under the authority of a Federal warrant for the arrest of Mr. Dickenson. An investigation by the Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney's Office found no basis for charges being brought against the agent who shot Dickenson.

However, that agent was indicted under State law by a Humboldt County Grand Jury; and as a result, the agent has been placed on limited duty until those charges are resolved. While in that status, he cannot participate in normal enforcement duties such as searches, arrests, etc.

No Federal agents participated in any of the other incidents to which you alluded. In fact there was no Federal involvement in the great majority of the so called "mistaken raids" which have received so much notoriety.

There is in effect a statement of policy governing each DEA agent concerning searches, seizures, and arrests, which is designed to limit the use of "no-knock" warrants, to establish strict guidelines governing an agent's conduct, and to clearly define the circumstances under which forcible entry may be undertaken.

It has been made abundantly clear that no deviation from these

guidelines will be tolerated. Any action by any agent which is not compatible with established policy and good law enforcement practices will be dealt with swiftly and severely.

JOHN R. BARTELS, JR.

Acting Administrator

I find Mr. Bartels' letter interesting, both for what it does and does not say. The line, "An investigation. . . found no basis for charges being brought against the agent who shot Dickenson," is at variance with the news report that the agent, Lloyd Clifton, shot Dickenson in the back (killing him), in violation of bureau rules against shooting at fleeing suspects. It is also significant that although "the raiding party was acting in the line of duty under the authority of a Federal warrant for the arrest of Mr. Dickenson," the warrant was apparently based on false information, which would have led to a false arrest, had Dickenson not been killed out of hand. This surely cannot be excused so easily. Nor is the mild slap on the wrist for agent Clifton appropriate for a case which, at the least, involves manslaughter. I'm afraid this letter only underscores the magnitude of the problems involved in the Nixon administration's subtle attempts to set up a police state here.—TW

Or So You Say???

I read your editorial on those no-knock drug raids that hit the wrong addresses, and it puzzles me that local fire departments, with possibly a 2 minute alert can find an ad-

dress the first time, and get their work done. No one thinks twice about it. How come the narcs can't show the same amount of foresight? They surely are not doing their image any good, and their mission suffers from it.

Several years ago, before the conservatives got their crusade under way against their bete noir (drugs, especially) the liberal viewers-with-alarm had a chance to formulate a law which would Rid The Land Of Violence, much as that other one, what's its name?, got rid of vile alcohol between 1920 and 1933. They got a law through that was to control sales of firearms and do various other good works. Actually, they added a number of crimes to the books that hadn't previously existed, and hired some eager beavers to enforce said rules vigorously. In some places, the Treasury Department group which had enforced this set of laws and its predecessor managed to continue on their way, building cases against careless or actually criminal people and getting them canned without too much adverse noise. Then, in Maryland, a raid by an armed mob of assorted local, State, and Federal agents went into an apartment in an area where there had been some strong-arm robberies. They bashed a door down, caught a couple who were getting ready for bed. Wife in her underwear screamed they were being robbed, and her husband got out of the tub naked, grabbed for a gun, and let one shot off into the floor, since the agents had their

guns out already. There followed a search for hand grenades and other bad stuff, and then off to the pokey. The wounded man didn't die, but has been partially paralyzed. The case quietly fizzled out, as they found he had a couple of inert grenade bodies and a small gun collection. Their informer was a friendly neighborhood burglar, whose 100% accurate data given previously had been on cases where he had done the burglary. This little fairy tale really caused trouble. The wounded man worked for one of the most vigorously anti-gun papers on the east coast.

Several similar cases have since occurred, a couple of them involving near-entrapment of the victims. The particular group has been claimed to have the lowest level of training in the law enforcement business, and a few of them seem to have the true crusading approach, like one kid who casually visited a small town police chief, intruding while he was conversing with someone in his office, dry firing a .357 Magnum at the wall, and generally informing the chief as to what a hot shot he himself was, and how their agency intended to disarm the USA eventually, including the police. . . . How to make friends and influence people. . . .

You mentioned the 1st Amendment of the Bill of Rights. All these were added because the original Constitution lacked them. The 4th, on searches and seizures, has been badly stretched by these eager beaver outfits. I would like to men-

tion the 2nd, which states that the main defense of a free state being a well-regulated militia, the people have the right to keep and bear arms. Know how some of the legal experts interpret that? They insist it means that anyone has the right to join the National Guard. . . . Fancy that. I have never seen anyone smashing the armory doors down to enlist. It is a right that does not amount to shit if it is true.

Actually, the Founding Fathers knew they couldn't get the taxpayers to hold still for a really good regular army, so they left it up to the states to organize militia. There was no National Guard in the 1780s as we now know the term, an Organized Militia armed and paid by the Federal Govt and useable in the state for emergencies. Militia then meant all able bodied male citizen not in the pokey, armed with their personal shoulder weapon and equipment. The New England States had been fighting Indians like that since the 1650s. So the Amendment meant that there should be no interference with the citizen's right to own and bear arms for legal purposes. Several states offered their own versions, which in some cases flatly stated that each individual citizen had the right to own arms for personal defense and for legal hunting. Working this around to that modern interpretation really requires some gnats-straining camel swallows.

I wonder how some of the papers, such as the *Washington Post* and the *NY Times* would feel if

they managed to delete one part of the Bill of Rights, only to find that they had opened the path to their own destruction. . . . 'Tis sport to see the engineer. . . Hoist with his own petard. . . .

JOHN P. [illegible]

52 Columbia St.

Newark, Ohio, 43055

Your raise several interesting points, John (and I apologize for not being able to make out your last name—next time, please type your name as well as signing it. . .). The Kenneth Ballou case received quite a good deal of publicity here, since it took place in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. Ballou was permanently paralyzed, lost his livelihood, and never received adequate compensation from the government for the mistaken raid on his apartment. Each of the several agencies involved has whitewashed its own participation, and in my opinion this case is another example of the daily miscarriage of justice perpetuated by the "No Knock" laws. As for the Bill of Rights provisions of bearing arms, the problem, quite simply, is that we no longer have any legitimate purpose for the civilian use of arms, save hunting for sport—itself a much abused pursuit. The hysteria which has led homeowners to arm themselves (and not with "shoulder weapons") against intruders has also led to a number of cases of accidental manslaughter and a generally irresponsible use of these weapons. The number of cases in which panicky homeowners have fired weapons

through doors at unseen (and usually innocent) victims are legion—and impossible to justify. The number of cases in which arguments within families have led to the use of guns—because they were easily at hand—is even greater. And the misuse of guns by children, leading to fatal "accidents," is dangerously great. (The father of a close friend of mind was shot and killed in the livingroom of one of his close friends, by his friend's small son, for example.) When the Bill of Rights was framed, we lived in a frontier society. We don't any longer. And our population is many times greater. While I am opposed to the total ban on guns envisioned by some, I cannot justify the present abuse of guns by an irresponsible populace. (Nor do I care to justify the abuse of these weapons by equally irresponsible members of federal or local governments.) Guns are too easy to use, too easy to misuse, and the results of their abuse are too often irrevocable. The ultimate answer is a responsible citizenry. But I am not utopian enough to see that as the immediately forthcoming solution. —TW

Dear Ted,

Prompted to write by Lester Boutillier's seemingly omnipresent byline in the letters section, along with others who shall go nameless. Just got the Dec. '73 issue, and was also prompted to write by Gordon Eklund's fascinatingly conceived, slightly preachy, competently written, disappointingly short piece,

"Moby, Too." But back to Lester. I notice that where Rich Geis rates a 9 (or in this issue, a seven) on his personalzine, Lester only rated something around a two. Obviously, your fanzine reviewer must like Geis's personality much better than Lester's, and even though I've only read a few letters by Geis, and *The Alien Critic #4*, I'm inclined to agree with him. Re-reading *Dangerous Visions* edited by We-all-know-who, it struck me that you're doing what that book set out to do, by publishing things once labeled either "New Wave" or *Dangerous Visions* in addition to other fine varieties of fiction, which none of the major 'zines seem to be doing. Notably, in this category, is *Analog*, one of Lester's favorites, and mine, too, not so much for the fiction (which has, to my way of thinking, improved after John Campbell's unfortunate death) but for the features and artwork. Well, AMAZING and FANTASTIC have the features, but artwork? Sadly lacking with the exception of covers, and one or two gems occasionally by Kaluta and Jones. And the cover: I much prefer the cover painting to take up the whole front of the magazine, with the logo and printing done over it, than having it framed and pushed to the bottom. I don't know; maybe it's more economical, easier, more popular or *something*, but you've even reduced the space that these framed artworks take up. And one of the things that drew me to AMAZING and FANTASTIC was the excellence

of your cover work. And one of the things that helps to make a magazine popular is good cover art, so spread it out all over that cover!

Back to Lester and your book reviewers this issue, which have been missing lately: My statements earlier on about the type of fiction you publish were inspired by Lester's dislike of Malzberg's "On Ice." In my opinion, the story was flawed, but for a different reason. I didn't object to the sex in the story, and I thought it was presented in an imaginative manner, but it could have been longer, developing more fully the psychological implications and ramifications of such a situation. That's the thing I think most of your fiction in AMAZING and FANTASTIC lack, Ted—carrying an idea beyond the most immediate sphere of experience. There are exceptions, of course, and "Junction," by Jack Dann in the Nov. FANTASTIC instantly springs to mind. Fascinating, beautifully written fantasy. Anyway, on to Chauvin and Monteleone. I can always tell when Chauvin has written a letter; if you'll excuse the pun it's very Chauvinistic, from the first paragraph on. Ditto his reviews. Somehow, in a review, Chauvin manages not only to inject his own biases, (something, I suppose, a reviewer must do) but he also is very subjective when it comes to determining what it is, basically, that makes a good story. Now apply that to the dilemma of deciding whether something is good science fiction or not, and the inconsistencies and idiosyn-

cracies are compounded. Don't get me wrong; I agree with most everything he says. It's just that the way he says it. . . . And then there's Monteleone. Him, I disagree with, most of the time, flat out. I also am offended by his sarcastic wit that is hardly wit at all, and his pretending attitude that he really feels sorry for the person who wrote the book, when he would take a different attitude in the rest of the review, if he did. I don't know him personally, (in the same way I don't know how to spell personally) and this is only a comment on his writing. Quite a few people come across differently on paper than they do in person.

At any rate, a few more random comments: I would rather see more short fiction than serials in your magazines; more on the order of *The Mag of F&SF*, something more like the Nov. issue of *FANTASTIC*. Damn straight issue! I'm glad for *The Clubhouse*, your editorials, the letters, the book reviews. If possible, back to some more articles by De Camp, Panshin, Benford, and anybody else who'd be willing.

Finally, this poem:

I'M HAVING AN ELLISON SANDWICH

Samuel in the cassorole,
Harlan in the soup,
My dwarfs love hyperbole
And there's Robert in the group!

You've got a good magazine, and I wonder why I included that poem. Keep up the fine work!

TIM RYAN

12425 Vine Maple Dr.
Tacoma, Washington 98499

The cover treatment—and layout—depends very much on the individual painting. Unlike many editors or art-directors, I select each painting we use purely on the basis of its effectiveness and attractiveness as a painting. However, many of these paintings do not lend themselves to the full-cover treatment you prefer. To take as examples the covers on the last four issues, Mike Hinge's August, 1973, painting—like most Hinge paintings—is full of detail, and simply had no space to overlay a logo or type (type never looks good laid over detail work anyway). At that, I was forced to crop the bottom of the painting in order to fit it on the cover (the black and white version printed on p.14 of that issue shows the full painting). Jeff Jones' two paintings (on the October, 1973, and February, 1974, issues) were designed by him to be framed below the type—he sent along suggested layouts (which I followed) for each. And Don Davis' December, 1973, cover was conceived as a horizontal painting and was, before the left side was cropped, even wider. (If we had been able to do wraparound front and back covers, it would have been ideal.) In each case what I have tried to do is to present the painting in the most striking and effective way possible for that painting. When a painting—like Pederson's June, 1973, cover or Miller's cover last issue—lends itself to full-cover treatment it is presented that way. I have absolutely no set policy for cover

formats—just the publisher's requirement that the stories and their authors be prominently displayed on the upper half of the cover, which I try to do as tastefully as possible. Over the past year I've used a wider variety of typefaces and modes of presentation in order

to complement the paintings themselves and give us the most striking and salable covers possible. Many readers have expressed pleasure with paintings which are framed and unadorned with type, but quite obviously I can't please all of you all the time. . . —TW

A Second Death (cont. from page 45) into the building. Upstairs one of the others was waiting for him to arrive. It was evening, late, cold, and when Burich walked through the door, the other left with barely a word.

He sat down at the console. It was already activated. "Susan?"

—Go away.

"Susan, it's Andre. I've come to help you."

A long silence. —Will you stop it, Andre? I want it to stop. It seemed to Burich that she was crying.

"Okay, it's stopped." He reached out and disconnected the pulse transmitter. "Goodbye," he added silently.

He leaned back and watched the screen. A long time later, the girl flickered once, twice, and seemed to just fade. She was gone.

A hand shook him gently. "Okay," Thomas said, "how did

you do it?"

Burich looked at the monitors. All read zero. There was no concentration. He looked at Thomas, who said, "I'd really like to know, Andre. We're all going to have to explain this."

"It was the transmitter. The computer kept shooting pulses into her every minute, just enough to keep her a little out of equilibrium. Whenever we talked to her, we did the same thing. I just disconnected the transmitter."

"And restored balance. I suppose we'll have to find another one, now. Science marches on." He caught the look on Burich's face. "Don't worry about it, Andre. There'll have to be some changes."

Burich went to the window. "Yeah, there'll have to be." He looked out. "Damn it, it's still raining."

—MICHAEL CASSUTT

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Editorial (cont. from page 4)

which he used as research for this study," the phrase "now numbers in the thousands, and which" has been crossed out. I wonder why.)

I haven't had time to thoroughly read the book yet, although I intend to, but I have read its opening chapters and looked up several of the subjects and people listed in the index, the latter mostly out of curiosity.

And, friends, I was right. My prediction, borne out of pessimism in early 1970, has come true. Wertham, despite access to such authoritative works on fandom as Harry Warner Jr's *All Our Yesterdays*, totally confuses the publications of comics fandom with those of sf fandom, and seems remarkably poorly informed about the history and antecedents of both fandoms. What he appears to have done is to have amassed a haphazard collection of fanzines, largely by chance and accident, with no awareness of the context into which these fanzines fit, or even their relative literary worth. Most of the major publications of sf fandom remain unknown to him (which is why he seems to feel fanzines are primarily the work of "adolescents"), and his book is based upon the inferences he has drawn from those fanzines he has.

One cannot fault him, perhaps, for ignoring those fanzines of which he was unaware, but one can object to the meagerness of his research and his willingness to accept as a cross-section of fan-

zines the far-from-representative sampling he has collected. One comes to the conclusion that once again a perhaps well-meaning outsider has dipped his toe briefly into our microcosm and then gone out to tell the world All About Us. Certainly most sf fans of any tenure in the world of sf fandom could have written a superior book—and several (Warner, Moskowitz) have.

Well, what has Wertham to say about fanzines? Surprisingly (but not too surprisingly, in light of the original note in *The Twentieth Century Fund Newsletter*), he likes them. He regards them as one of the last bastions of a genuinely free press. Although he understands them none too well, he likes what he has seen. So let us give him that: He has not come among us to denounce.

2. A CHANGE AT THE CLUBHOUSE: Speaking of fanzines, this issue debuts a new proprietor of our fanzine-review column, *The Clubhouse*.

The column, if I may remind older readers and bring newer ones up to date, began in 1948, under the aegis of Rog Philips (Graham), and was one of the first such columns to appear regularly in the professional sf magazines. It was a victim of the 1953 changeover of AMAZING from pulp format to the present digest-size format—a changeover which brought about the elimination of almost all of AMAZING's then-

regular features, including the editorial and letter column.

Several attempts were made in the fifties to revive the fanzine review column in these pages, but they were half-hearted, obviously written by someone who had little interest in fanzines and sf fandom, and they died quickly. They also went under other headings—*The Clubhouse* as a title was not used.

In 1969 I decided it was time to revive the column under its original name, and enlisted the help of John D. Berry. The first installment of the revived column appeared in the July, 1969, issue of *AMAZING*, the second issue under my editorship. John continued the column through the September, 1972, issue, at which point he decided that he'd had enough.

After a pause, during which the column's space was used to serialize in four installments the Pilgrim's Progress of sf fandom, *The Enchanted Duplicator* by Bob Shaw & Walt Willis, the column was resumed by Ed Smith. Unfortunately, during Ed's stewardship of the column he underwent a considerable upheaval in his life involving a move to Washington, D.C., a new job, and subsequent changes in his career, each of which contributed by growing difficulties in handling the demands of the column. Thus, after five columns and almost a year with *The Clubhouse*, he felt he could not continue it.

After some consultation with John D. Berry, who had become

an Associate Editor in the meantime, I wrote to Susan Glicksohn to ask her if she would be interested in doing the column.

My reasons were several. She will not be the first distaff fanzine reviewer—that honor went, twenty years or more ago, to Mari Wolfe (Rog Philips' wife at that time), who conducted *Fandora's Box* for the now-defunct *Imagination*—but in this era of sexual equality it certainly made good sense to consider a woman for *The Clubhouse*. And Susan's credentials were impressive. Co-publisher and co-editor (with her husband, Michael) of the Hugo-winning fanzine, *Energumen*, publisher and editor in her own right of *Aspidastra*, an underrated fanzine devoted in the main to contemporary social problems (ecology, women's rights, etc.) as viewed within the context of sf fandom (Wertham is right—fanzines are "A Special Form of Communication"), and runner-up for a Hugo as the Best Fanwriter of 1972, Susan is eminently qualified to discuss and review fanzines.

Her debut column, in this issue, underscores her qualifications. I'm very pleased to welcome her to *The Clubhouse* and to *AMAZING*. I hope and trust her stay will be a long and fruitful one.

3. APOLOGIES: We've recently had problems with the transposition of pages in both this magazine and her sister magazine,

FANTASTIC. In the latter magazine two pages were reversed in the letter column; in this magazine four pages were transposed in the body of Associate Editor Grant Carrington's "Annapolis Town" in the February, 1974, issue. To read the story correctly, go from p. 71 to p. 74. Page 75 then follows, after which turn back to p. 72, followed by p. 73, and thence to p. 76, after which the remainder of the pages are in the proper sequence. My apologies to both you, our readers, and to Grant, the author of the story, for this confusingly complex mixup. I'd like to hope that it won't happen again—but my fingers are crossed.

4. IN ISSUES TO COME: Next issue—Jack Vance is back! We've got a new novel from him, "The Domains of Koryphon," an indirect sequel (it's set in the same universe) to *Trullion: Alastor* 2262, which appeared here last year (and was subsequently published by Ballantine). As usual, the novel will be serialized in two parts, in our August and October issues.

And what's coming up after that, you ask? A brand new short novel by Charles L. Harness, "The Araqnid Window," which will appear complete in our December, 1974, issue. Harness has never been a prolific author, but each of his stories and novels has attracted major attention and this one, I predict, will be no exception.

Additionally, Ron Miller, whose fine astronomical painting graced the cover of our last issue (and who will have more astronomical paintings upcoming here) has done a very different cover for 'Harness' novel, as well as the interior illustration. About the only way I can describe Miller's non-astronomical work is to say that although it does not resemble Mike Hinge's work closely, I'm sure readers will be comparing the two. (For a preview of Miller's talents, look for the July issue of FANTASTIC, out next month, in which he tackles the theme of swords & sorcery and does the cover for the new Conan novella.)

5. TYPOGRAPHY: An issue or two back we changed typesetters (again!) in an effort to iron out some of our problems with typography. Well, we're still working on it, but since each typesetter seems to have a slightly different typeface with which to work, it's always tricky estimating the correct amount of material for an issue. As a result, more than ten pages of letters already set in type had to be held over for this issue, where they comprise the totality of the letter column this issue. I particularly regret that Lester Boutillier's reply to Tom Watson—scheduled to directly follow Watson's letter last issue—had to be among those held over. Next issue we'll catch up on more recent letters.

—TED WHITE

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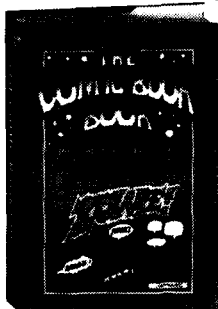
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Apt. No.

Zip

DIESEL MECHANICS

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- ☐ Complete Training

RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT

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If you had mailed this coupon a year ago, perhaps your salary would be up too!



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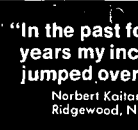
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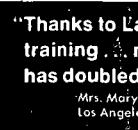
"Since enrolling with LaSalle my salary has doubled."
Robert Kubec,
St. Cloud, Minnesota.



"In the past four years my income has jumped over \$9,000."
Norbert Kaitan,
Ridgewood, N.Y.



"My salary has quadrupled since starting the course."
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"Thanks to LaSalle training... my salary has doubled."
Mrs. Mary M. Nyberg,
Los Angeles, Calif.

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